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10

...is
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active

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From the Editor

When I bought my first iPad, I was a little overexcited. Just as some Lottery winners recklessly buy everything they see within hours of scooping the jackpot, I downloaded hundreds of apps that I soon realised I would never actually use. What I needed then was someone like Jane Hoskyn to spend several months testing hundreds of apps, then whittle them down to a definitive Top 40. That's what she's done for this issue's Cover Feature, which is a must-read for anyone with a phone or tablet. If you think we unfairly omitted any apps, please let me know.

A more important question than which apps



to install is whether you need to download Windows 10 when it's launched later this month, so our next issue is a 'Windows 10: Should You Upgrade?' special. It will give you a no-hype guide to the new operating system. The issue will be available in shops from 22 July, a week before Windows 10 arrives.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

£350

Price of Acer's new 32in PC monitor, which gets five stars – **p19**



152Mbps

Top speed of Virgin's new broadband service – **p7**

17 million

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HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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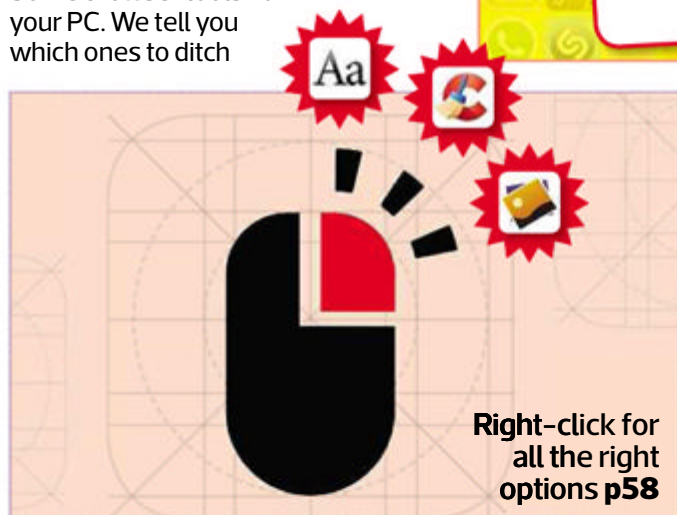
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BUY IT!
★★★★★

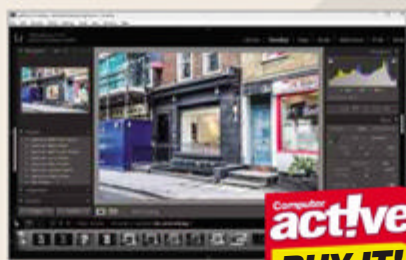
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★★★★★

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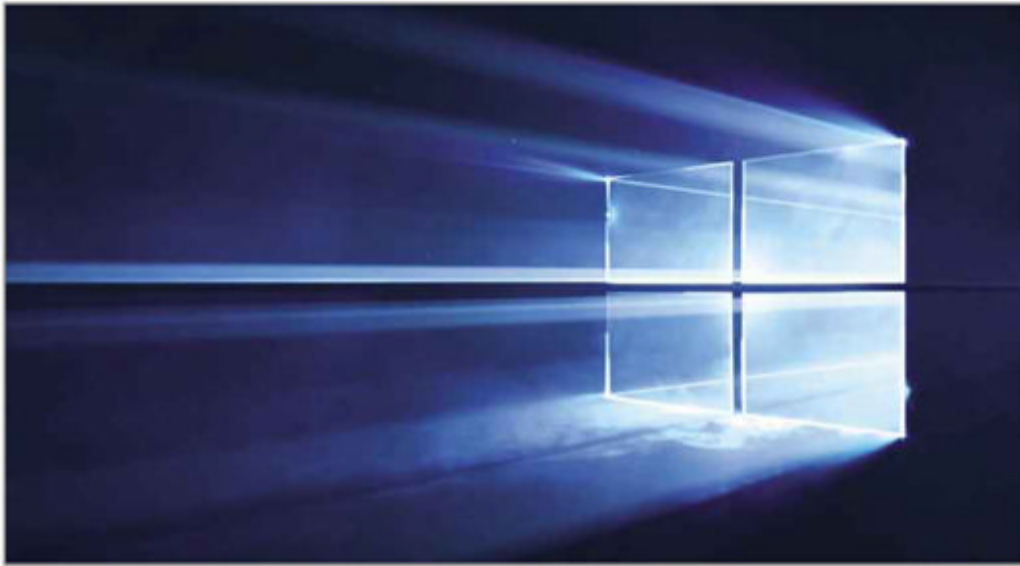


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Windows 10 to cost £99.99 for XP and Vista users?



COMMENT

Microsoft is getting a little carried away by silly marketing tricks in the run up to Windows 10's launch. It should have confirmed the operating system's price before teasing us with the sort of promotional campaign supermarkets use. We don't blame Microsoft for generating hype around the free upgrade – it's a huge event. But with less than a month until the launch, Microsoft should stop playing games and just give users the basic information they need to help them decide whether to upgrade.

Microsoft has suggested that the price of Windows 10 Home for XP and Vista users will be £99.99.

The company updated its 'Get Windows 10' app to include the message "Enjoy Windows 10 for free", with the price of £99.99 crossed out.

You can open the app by clicking the Windows icon that Microsoft is adding to Windows 7 and 8 Taskbars in order to let you 'reserve' your upgrade to the new operating

system. Anyone using Windows 7 or 8 will be able to upgrade for free from 29 July.

In the app's small print Microsoft says that £99.99 is the "estimated" price of Windows 10 Home. The company hasn't confirmed any pricing outside the US, where Home will cost \$119 and Pro \$199. These convert to around £75 and £126 respectively, though the actual price is likely to be higher.

If Windows 10 is priced at

£99.99, it means that XP and Vista users would be better off buying a licence for Windows 7 or 8 then upgrading for free. Licences for 7 and 8 are widely sold on Amazon for around £70 (www.snipca.com/17145).

WINDOWS 10 WALLPAPER

Microsoft has also revealed a futuristic-looking default wallpaper for Windows 10 (see main image above). In a YouTube video (www.snipca.com/17145).

[com/17127](http://www.snipca.com/17127)) the company explains how it used "blasting lasers, pumping smoke machines, coloured filters and falling crystal dust" to create the effect of light streaming through the Windows logo.

It was designed by San Francisco-based director Bradley G Munkowitz, who said he wanted to represent the Windows 10 logo "as a portal that was allowing us to look into space". Stylish, moody and cinematic, it's starkly different to the past four default wallpapers (see box left).

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PAST FOUR WINDOWS WALLPAPERS



XP



Vista



Windows 7



Windows 8



You'll like this...

Microsoft has released Office for Android phones (www.snipca.com/17139)



... but not this

Hotels.com customers are being targeted by email scams (www.snipca.com/17124)

Anger over Royal Mail's secret junk-mail onslaught

You could soon be bombarded by junk mail just by clicking on a product online, under a pilot scheme being secretly set up by Royal Mail.

The company is working on a trial with an unnamed online retailer to use **cookies** that track items shoppers add to their basket, before matching that information to the shopper's address.

If an item is removed from the basket, Royal Mail will be paid by the website to send the shopper a personalised marketing letter a couple of days later encouraging them to buy the item.

The junk mail is in effect a physical equivalent of the targeted digital adverts that follow shoppers around the internet.

Shoppers won't even be able to opt out of receiving the



junk mail using the Mailing Preference Service (www.mpsonline.org.uk), because it only prevents generic marketing mail from being sent.

Websites do let people opt out of receiving marketing through the post, but the anonymity of the online retailer involved in the trial means shoppers won't know how to avoid this new source of junk.

The plans are part of Royal Mail's business strategy of finding new ways to make

money, as falling letter-delivery revenue and competition for parcel deliveries continue to eat into the company's profit.

Privacy campaigners Big Brother Watch slammed the scheme. The group's research director Daniel Nesbitt said: "These plans mean

that not only will people be bombarded by targeted adverts, they could also be deluged by letters, often with no knowledge of why or how Royal Mail have got hold of this information".

"People have a right to know where this kind of marketing is coming from and most importantly why they're getting it," he added.

Royal Mail insisted it wouldn't use its own database of addresses in the trial, and wouldn't share any data with other companies.

IN BRIEF

VIRGIN TO ROLL OUT LIGHTNING BROADBAND

Virgin Media has started work on Project Lightning, the largest investment in the UK's broadband infrastructure in more than a decade. The service will be rolled out in Manchester first. An extra 150,000 homes and businesses in the city will be able to get 152Mbps, double the average speeds available from BT, TalkTalk and Sky. Virgin says it will spend £3bn by 2020 extending the service across the UK, reaching 17 million homes.

ADOBE FIXES YET ANOTHER FLASH FLAW

Adobe has released yet another emergency security update to fix a Flash flaw. The latest bug was being exploited by Chinese hackers to remotely access and control PCs. Visit Adobe's website (www.snipca.com/17060) to check you're using the latest version (18.0.0.194). If not, download it from <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer>. Flash is automatically updated in the Chrome and Internet Explorer browsers.

Samsung laptops to stop disabling Windows Update

Samsung is to stop disabling Windows Update on some of its laptop models. This was after it initially denied that its laptops did this.

The decision came just days after a claim that Samsung prevents Windows Update from running was made by Microsoft's Most Valuable Professional Patrick Barker, whose job involves fixing bugs in Windows and analysing malware.

Barker explained on his blog (www.snipca.com/17070) that Samsung laptops were running a file, Disable_Windowsupdate.exe, which is part of the company's SW Update software, (download it from: www.snipca.com/



17087). Samsung uses this to update pre-installed programs and **drivers** on its laptops.

It appears that Samsung was shutting down Windows Update to ensure it wouldn't interfere with its own update procedures. A Samsung support representative told Barker that SW Update blocks Windows Update because it could install drivers that may not work on the laptop. But following criticism from security experts, Samsung has said it will stop blocking

Windows Update.

It's an important issue because without Windows Update users miss out on Microsoft's bug fixes, driver updates, program updates and security patches for the operating system. This leaves them wide open to hackers.

Independent security researcher Graham Cluley had accused Samsung of making life easier for hackers. He said: "As there are many instances of malware trying to deliberately disable Windows Updates in order to get on with their dirty work, I personally wouldn't feel entirely comfortable if Samsung was going around doing the job for them".

Tomorrow's world

Few pieces of technology are more confusing than the TV remote control, which seems to have a dozen more buttons than it needs. Happily, we may soon have an alternative that requires no button-pushing at all because the BBC has developed a prototype headset that reads brainwaves, letting you control your TV using your thoughts. Watch it being used at www.snipca.com/17027.

IN BRIEF

FIRST OFFICIAL RASPBERRY PI CASE

The Raspberry Pi Foundation has released the first official case to house its popular microcomputer. It fits the new Raspberry Pi 2, which was released earlier this year, and provides access to the primary ports, including the **microSD** slot. The power and activity lights are visible through the case. It's available from the Raspberry Pi Swag Store priced £6 (www.snipca.com/17002), plus £3 for delivery.

TOSHIBA SELLS £199 WINDOWS 10 LAPTOPS

Toshiba has launched laptops in its Satellite range that can run Windows 10, although they come installed with Windows 8.1. The cheapest is the £199 Satellite C40-C, with a **dual-core Celeron processor**, 2GB memory and a 32GB **SSD**. The laptops have a keyboard key that launches Cortana, Microsoft's voice-activated personal assistant, in Windows 10. Customers will be able to upgrade to Windows 10 when it's released on 29 July.

Switch broadband with just one phone call (no MAC required!)

Changing your broadband provider is now much easier following the introduction of new rules drafted by regulator Ofcom.

If you want to switch, all you now need to do is phone the company you want to move to. They will then handle every aspect of the transfer process.

Customers will receive a letter from their old and new ISP confirming that the switching process is under way. The letter will also outline any termination fees that are due.

Until now, customers had several options when switching, depending on which company they were signed up to and which service they were using.

In many cases, customers had to contact their existing ISP to cancel, then ask it for a Migration Authorisation Code (MAC) to pass on to their new ISP. Ofcom described this process as "confusing and time-consuming" and claimed it deterred customers from



shopping around for deals.

However, the new rules may not make it faster to move to a new ISP because a 10-day notification period remains a part of the switching process. No matter how easy it becomes to switch broadband, it won't happen in less than 10 days – at least, not under existing rules.

There are also fears that by making it easier to switch providers, ISPs will increase 'slamming' customers. This is the practice of moving them on to a new ISP without their

consent, and is considered "mis-selling" by Ofcom.

To combat this, Ofcom says ISPs must keep records of all customer requests to switch broadband, helping the regulator spot any malpractice.

The new rules apply to ISPs using the Openreach telecoms network, such as BT, EE, Sky and TalkTalk. Virgin Media is excluded because it uses its own cable network.

For advice on switching broadband visit Ofcom's website: www.snipca.com/17005.

Europe-wide police team to fight ISIS on Twitter

A European police team is being set up to close social-media accounts run by supporters of Islamic State (ISIS).

The unit run by Europol will work closely with a number of social-media networks to shut down new pro-ISIS accounts within two hours of them appearing.

Europol didn't say which sites it would be working with, but it's likely to be Twitter, which is regularly used by ISIS supporters to incite hatred, post videos and recruit members.

In May this year, a report by the Washington-based Brookings Institute said that ISIS supporters could be running up to 90,000 Twitter accounts. Security analysts say that the Islamist



group use Twitter to tempt sympathisers with a life of jihad, and then try to recruit them directly using Skype and WhatsApp.

Europol director Rob Wainwright told the BBC that tracking online accounts would be an "effective" way to combat

the spread of pro-ISIS propaganda and recruitment.

But he admitted that this alone wouldn't be enough to tackle the problem: "We will have to combine what we see online, with our own intelligence and information shared with us by European police services, so we can be a bit more targeted and identify who the key user accounts are... and concentrate on closing them down".

Twitter itself removes pro-ISIS accounts – a policy that, in March, led to death threats being issued to Twitter employees, including co-founder and CEO Jack Dorsey, by people claiming to represent the jihadist group.

Question of the Fortnite

Is Windows 10 launching too soon?

There are fears that the new OS won't be fit for purpose when it arrives

WINDOWS 10 COUNTDOWN!
29 July

For the millions of people who have struggled to get to grips with Windows 8, the arrival of its successor can't come soon enough. But many industry experts have questioned whether Windows 10 will be ready when it's made available to download on 29 July.

Doubts started to surface in April when the boss of processor company AMD suggested that Windows 10 would arrive in late July. Many industry experts reacted with disbelief. Technology journalist Steven J Vaughan-Nichols said at the time that launching so early was "beyond crazy". He warned users that Microsoft would not be able to fix all the bugs in the Preview versions of Windows 10 by late July, and accused the company of rushing the release of Windows 10 because "it's desperate to get Windows 8 out of sight and mind".

“Experts have warned users that Microsoft won't be able to fix all the bugs by late July”

He added: "I fear that Microsoft, by running at breakneck pace with its Windows 10 launch, will find that, instead of washing away the bad impression left by Windows 8, it will make its loyal users even more unhappy".

Many of the glitches that annoyed Windows 10 testers in April are now fixed. Of the flaws that remain, those that

mar the Start menu are the most infuriating, and have diluted the positive response to its return, after it was omitted in Windows 8. When we've used the Windows 10 previews, the Start menu has crashed too often, and sometimes refuses to open. We've also seen too many error messages, and the voice-activated personal assistant Cortana doesn't work

as well as it should.

Downloading new Preview builds has also proved tricky, which doesn't bode well for the mass-download of the final version on 29 July.

These are annoyances you'd expect to find in software previews, but it's worrying that so many still exist so near to the release date. But even with its problems, Windows 10 shows huge potential. Since

the first Preview appeared we've been predicting that the final build will be better than Windows 7 and 8. We're sticking by that forecast.

Microsoft needs Windows 10 to be an instant hit. Because it's a free upgrade for people running 7 and 8, Windows 10 will probably be downloaded by more people in its first 24 hours than any other operating system ever. If Windows 10 isn't ready, millions of people will find out immediately. And they won't be slow in venting their anger and disappointment across the internet.

Nobody realistically expects Windows 10 to be flawless at launch. Early bugs will need fixing and security holes will need patching. The more important question is whether these will be seen as the normal labour pains in the birth of an OS.

If and when to upgrade to Windows 10 are the biggest dilemmas PC users face this year. *Computeractive* will help you to decide in our next issue, which is a 'Windows 10:



THE FACTS

- Windows 7 and 8 users will be able to upgrade to Windows 10 for free from 29 July
- Many people using the Windows 10 Preview have reported that the Start menu regularly crashes
- There have also been problems with Cortana and downloading the Preview versions

Should you upgrade?' special. Much will depend on your current operating system and hardware, so we'll answer the question from the perspective of multiple PC setups.


Like a schoolboy cramming for days before an exam, Microsoft will work hard in the weeks preceding Windows 10's launch to quash bugs. The company is capable of ensuring huge leaps in performance in the few weeks before release, as the development of previous versions of Windows has shown. We hope it pulls off the same trick.

Letters


Tell us what's on your mind

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PC-repair shops: 'ignorant' customers at fault

 I don't know what kind of small PC-repair shops Michael Chadwick has gone to ('Let down by grouchy service in PC shops', Letters, Issue 452), but perhaps the problem isn't the poor service, as he claims, but irritating, ignorant customers (though I don't want to suggest Mr Chadwick was one). I used to work in a local computer shop, and we had to deal with some terrible customers. I lost count of the number of times people expected us to fix problems for free, as though we were a charity or a Government service. Many other customers fell into the 'I know better than you' camp. They confidently told us they knew what problem their PC had, but their diagnosis was often completely wrong. When we politely pointed this out, they often became very obnoxious. In the end I quit in despair!

Keith Thomson

 Michael Chadwick must have been very unlucky in his choice of local computer shops because I've always found them to be helpful, friendly and generous with their time. I'd like to give you one example. A few years ago, I was housebound after an accident at work. I had a problem with my PC, which I just couldn't fix. I phoned my local repair shop in Derby and explained that I couldn't take my PC to them. I asked for some advice over the phone, but instead the owner of the shop came to visit me in his lunch hour, fixed my problem, and only charged the normal fee. Does Mr Chadwick think PC World would have acted in a similar way?


Chris Baird

 I'm glad that Michael Chadwick was brave enough to criticise the customer services of local PC-repair shops. I know many people who have been completely ripped off by these local stores. They have walked into the shops with computers that have stopped working, and then been charged a stupid amount of money to perform the most basic fix – like running a CCleaner scan, for example. It's quite a simple scam, when you think about it. These experts prey on the ignorance of people, dazzle

them with technical jargon, then slap a huge bill in front of them. I shall stick with the simple, no-nonsense advice in *Computeractive*, thank you very much.

David Stark

Today's 'pampered generation' addicted to tech

 On the same day that I read about the so-called 'tablet generation' in *Computeractive* (News, Issue 451) a teacher was stabbed by a 14-year-old pupil in Bradford. Apparently the pupil was angry because the teacher had confiscated his phone. I fear this is where society is heading. We are raising a generation of children who are so wedded to their devices they can't bear to be parted from them. Worse, they think they have the 'right' to use their devices all the time, which is why they behave so badly when someone in authority takes them away.


My generation went to school in the 1950s. We weren't angels. I had possessions confiscated all the time, but these were things like sweets and comics. I didn't go berserk when my teacher took away my copy of *The Beano* because I knew I was being naughty, and just accepted that those were the rules. But this pampered generation seem to think differently. It worries me that we seem to be indulging



the technological addictions of today's youth. They probably think we are "disrespecting" them by removing access to phones and tablets. No good will come of it if we pander to this inflated sense of entitlement.

Duncan Grayson

Sorry Big Brother Watch, we don't live in 1984

 Who are these Big Brother Watch people you quote every time there's a privacy story? They cropped up yet again in Issue 452's 'Question of the Fortnight' about police having too much access to our data (guess which side Big Brother Watch were on!).

I have a simple message for this group, though they'll probably be too busy moaning and tutting about 'the powers that be' to read it. The very fact that they are free to call themselves Big Brother Watch means we don't live in George Orwell's 1984. The very fact that

Annoyed by eBay and Amazon – but I'll have to stick with them

 Why are all the websites I used to love doing everything in their power to annoy the hell out of me? First, Amazon increases the minimum order value for free delivery to £20, which I'd argue is a tenner too much. And now I read in Issue 452 that eBay is cold-calling customers. This may only be in the US at the moment, but most bad things that start in the US (Halloween, school proms, Black Friday) materialise in the

UK, and we'll have to accept it.

I tend to make money selling stuff on eBay, then spend that money on Amazon. I wish I could use different sites, but sadly these two have such a large market dominance that I'll probably have to stick with them. Or maybe *Computeractive* readers could work together to launch alternatives that don't mistreat their customers?

Geoff Hodgson



they have the freedom to criticise Government 'spying' is proof that we don't live in an Orwellian dystopia. The fact they can publish a report into police accessing data shows that we live in one of the most open and transparent societies in the world.

I'm thinking of starting a website called Big Brother Watch Watch, where I can monitor and report on the paranoid activities of these conspiracy theorists. I'll let you know how I get on, assuming they don't shut me down first.

David Cooper

Well done for not patronising older people

✉ In Issue 451, you carried a couple of articles about older people using PCs, tablets and other technology. I'm 74 years old and have embraced technology all my life since my university days, well before personal PCs. I used computers during my civil engineering studies and throughout my working life. They were huge machines that only colleges and universities could afford. I now feel sorry for those who feel that technology has passed them by, as an acquaintance once told me. They are constantly being ripped off by banks and utility companies as they are not offered deals that are only available online.

Computeractive offers articles written in a jargon-free way that makes it an easy read for people who are not geeks. By being not patronising to older readers you have gained their support. I wish the same could be said for companies like Apple, who tend to patronise older customers by saying they should be treated differently. Apple should take a leaf out of your book and treat its older customers with respect.

Ralph Torretta

Moderators on forums adopt 'autocratic attitude'

✉ Stuart Andrews was right to criticise the damage carried out by hackers online (The Final Straw, Issue 452), and he touched on an important point that rarely gets covered – the flaws in letting online 'communities' govern websites. In theory, this is a good idea because it fits in with the 'everyone is equal' ideals behind the internet. But in reality it corrupts those given the power to govern. The moderators of online forums are the best example. I've become a member of, and then resigned from,

STAR LETTER

Suspicious of Windows 10 'fundamentalists'

✉ In Letters, Issue 452, Derek Key gave us four reasons why we should upgrade to Windows 10. He unwittingly provided one very big reason why I reserve judgement: how fanatical he sounds. His evangelism is rather off-putting. He almost sounds like a Windows 10 fundamentalist trying to win followers, when he raves about a "new generation of Windows users all operating the same system".

He then goes through the different operating systems, presuming to read the minds of people still using them. He says XP users are all moaning about the end of support. Well, some might be. Others, like myself, are happy to use XP on old PCs to carry out basic tasks, and understand that Microsoft had no choice but to terminate support last year. He says Vista users are moaning that they are ignored. Well, I'm not. I occasionally use Vista on a laptop, and I don't care if software makers have abandoned it. He says Windows 7 users are feeling "smug" because their system still works. Maybe, but I bet many are keen to try something new. Lastly, he says that Windows 8 users are kicking themselves for ever choosing to upgrade. Well, I'm one person who still enjoys using Windows 8, and think it



has been unfairly condemned as a confusing system.

I'm not anti-Windows 10. I'm just against hype and irrational optimism. Like most people I'm glad that it's free, but it doesn't mean I will automatically upgrade. I'll wait to see what the experts (including *Computeractive*) say about the system, then make my mind up. Sorry Mr Key, I'm left unswayed by your zealotry.

Philip James

CA says We agree with Philip that people should think hard about whether upgrading to Windows 10 is right for them. It's great the operating system is free for Windows 7 and 8 users, and we like what we've seen so far, but that doesn't mean everyone needs to upgrade. Read our next issue (out Wed 22 July) for a special 8-page guide that explains who should upgrade, and who should stick with what they've got.

The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!



many online forums as a result of the autocratic attitudes adopted by moderators. They're given a little power, which then quickly goes to their head, and they start banning people for little reason. I've no idea what the answer is. It's just human nature, sadly.

Malcolm Carpenter

ISPs will find another way to penalise customers

✉ I think *Computeractive* is right to be wary of Ofcom's new rules that stop ISPs charging fees when you cancel your contract (News, Issue 452). You say that ISPs will try to recoup this lost pot of gold another way, and I think that's spot on. It's the same with banks. If you stop

banks charging people when they go overdrawn, they will simply investigate other ways to make the money. And that will probably mean charging people an annual fee for their current account. If you stop ISPs charging what is in effect a disloyalty penalty, they will find new ways to charge customers who don't switch.

I don't doubt Ofcom's sincerity in wanting a better deal for customers, but the best intentions of do-gooders can often lead to bad consequences. I hope I'm wrong in this case. But if everyone is paying more for their broadband in a

year's time, you'll know who to blame.

Susan McEvoy



Consumeractive

Can I ignore email from GoDaddy?

Q I have just received the following email in my Yahoo inbox from 'service@hbpaydepartment.co.uk', saying they have received a request from 'goDADDY.COM' to charge my account £3.99 a month or go to their website if I wish to cancel it. I've no knowledge of these people and payments. Should I just ignore this?



Roy German

A Yes. This is a phishing email and if you go to the site you've been directed to, you'll see a fake HSBC Bank UK web page. These emails are generated by **bots**, which have no idea whether or not you have an HSBC account. But if you do, and have fallen for this scam you should contact the bank immediately. You also need to change all your bank login details and run a security scan.

Some phishing emails are pretty basic while others are more sophisticated and harder to detect, but never reply to unsolicited emails even if they look genuine. Also, never log into your bank account or any other personal account via an emailed link. If you do, phone or email your bank or the company that runs your compromised account.



Is using an account generator illegal?

Q I was looking on eBay for Netflix or Now TV codes when I came across websites known as "Account Generators", where you can log into these TV subscription services without having to pay. I've contacted Netflix and it says you may "share" an account, but if a person isn't aware that you're using their details, is it fraud?

Chris Chapling



A Yes, it's fraud. And if Chris does use an account generator, he will commit two other serious criminal offences; theft and hacking under the Computer Misuse Act (CMA) 1990.

Netflix does have a pretty relaxed attitude to sharing passwords between friends and family but obviously this is consensual (www.snipca.com/16878). Account generators on the other hand are websites promising free access to a subscription service account such as Netflix, Sky Go or Skype without the subscriber's knowledge or permission. These websites have gathered stolen passwords to a live account or attempt to generate one, based on the fact most people use easily guessed passwords. But most of the time the passwords won't work and the only free deal

you'll get is malware, which will be designed to steal *your* personal information such as bank details and passwords.

So what are the penalties you could face if prosecuted? You're most likely to be prosecuted by the service providers, for example Netflix under the CMA, for hacking into their servers or for the offence of unauthorised access to computer material. Currently, you face up to two years in jail and a fine of up to £2,000. Changes to the CMA under the new Serious Crime Act 2015 make it easier to prosecute you.

You could also end up causing real problems for a legitimate user who could make a case for theft or fraud. Penalties vary, but for fraud it can be up to five years in prison.

Even if you don't get caught, it's a shady and immoral practice.



What can I do about my slow broadband service?

Q I've got broadband, TV and calls with Sky, but I'm not getting the internet speeds I've been promised. I'm supposed to get between 5 to 7Mbps, but can only get speeds of around 260Kbps. I'm paying £17 per month plus line rental. Do I have a case against Sky?

Malcolm Oakley



Broadband Code of Practice (www.snipca.com/16879), which Sky is signed up to. Under this, ISPs agree to manage customers' reported speed

problems. If they can't resolve these they must let the customer cancel the contract without penalty.

Malcolm also mentioned that Sky told him it used traffic management and this was why his speeds dropped at certain times. Traffic management is a common practice among ISPs and is used at peak times, for example in the evening when

lots of people access the internet at the same time. It's designed to give everyone reasonable access to the internet for tasks such as emailing or browsing the web so heavy users of video streaming or gamers don't consume most of the bandwidth.

But even with a traffic-management policy in place, his speeds are so far below what he's been promised, at all times of the day, that we've asked Sky to investigate his complaint. We'll update you in a later issue as to the outcome.





We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Please include both your phone number and address.

Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Have I been scammed buying Kaspersky on eBay?

Q I downloaded Kaspersky's security software after buying it from an eBay seller. I paid £27.99 through PayPal, but I didn't get sent an activation code for the software, so I haven't been able to run it on my PC. The eBay seller isn't answering my emails, and neither eBay nor PayPal will help. I'm without protection. Have I been scammed?

Pam Green

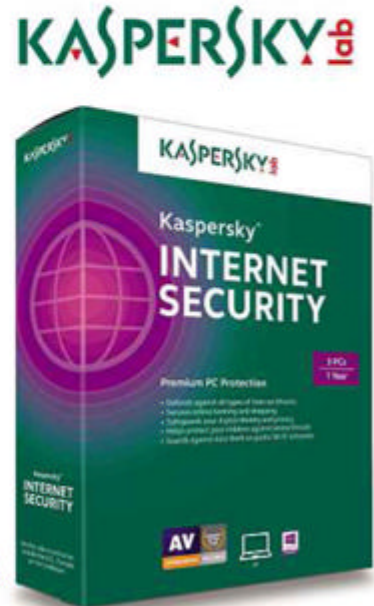
A Yes, we fear that Pam has been scammed, because the seller is no longer registered with eBay. Pam won't get a refund from eBay because under its Money Back Guarantee, downloads aren't considered 'tangible' items, so it doesn't cover them – genuine or counterfeit (read more at www.snipca.com/16848).

Pam's also out of luck with PayPal's Buyer Protection because it won't normally refund

digital transactions that have gone wrong; we say normally because if the cost is small it is worth trying. PayPal will (at its discretion) refund costs of up to £3.99 (www.snipca.com/16880).

Our advice with something as important as security software is to always play safe. Although there are many legitimate sellers of security software on eBay, you have precious little protection if you choose to download from one that isn't.

We'd always advise you to buy directly from the software developer, or through online stores. Our hugely popular Reader Offer for Kaspersky is still running – you can buy it for £17.99 (normal price £39.99) at www.snipca.com/14212.



CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE



PC World's Care Plan works like a normal warranty

In Issue 450, we explained the law on warranties to David Southworth ('Is this £300 MacBook warranty worth the money I paid for it?').

We advised David to contact the Financial Ombudsman Service (FO, www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk) if PC World refused to refund him. In the meantime, a reader contacted us to point out that if David had bought a Whatever Happens package from PC World, this would have been considered a service agreement and not insurance, and therefore the FO wouldn't have had the power to examine any claims. So we decided to clarify the situation. PC World told us it no longer offers Whatever Happens packages, so David won't be in receipt of one of these. What it offers now is called a Care Plan.

In the terms of this plan, if you pay monthly and cancel within 14 days, as long as the service hasn't been used you get a full refund. After 14 days you can cancel at any time, but there will be no refund. It's like when you pay your car insurance on a monthly basis – if you cancel it you won't get a refund. But if like David you paid for an extended term up front, PC World's terms and conditions make it much like a normal warranty. He could have asked for a full refund within 45 days, and even outside this can ask for a pro rata refund.

The FO agrees there's clearly confusion with the differences between service agreements and warranties. If you feel you've been misled, you can contact the FO on 0800 0234 567 or email complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Car tech and services

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0844 209 0754

Email form:
www.snipca.com/16826
Twitter: [@TheAA_Help](https://twitter.com/TheAA_Help)

Belkin
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Online support:
www.snipca.com/16829
Twitter: [@BelkinCares](https://twitter.com/BelkinCares)

Binatone
084 4557 9677
Email: enquiries@binatone-support.co.uk
Twitter: [@BinatoneUK](https://twitter.com/BinatoneUK)

Garmin
0808 238 0000
Email:
www.snipca.com/16772
Online support: www.garmin.com/uk/support
Twitter: [@GarminUK](https://twitter.com/GarminUK)

RAC
0800 015 6000

Email form:
www.snipca.com/16827
Twitter: [@RAC_Care](https://twitter.com/RAC_Care)

RoadHawk
01208 269 159
Email:
info@roadhawk.co.uk
Twitter: [@roadhawk_uk](https://twitter.com/roadhawk_uk)

Snooper
01928 579 579
Email: sales@snooper.eu
Twitter: [@SnooperUK](https://twitter.com/SnooperUK)

TomTom
Online contact:
www.snipca.com/16773
[@TomTom](https://twitter.com/TomTom)

TOMTOM
GARMIN



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Scam texts claiming to be from banks

What happened?

Anti-fraud agencies warned the public about a new, sophisticated spate of scams being sent by text message. Financial Fraud Action UK (FFA UK) said that criminals are trying to steal personal information by sending texts that purport to come from the recipient's bank.

Scammers are using several different tactics. One is to send a text message that claims the recipient's account has been targeted by fraudsters, and that they need to update their personal details. The message urges the victim to phone a number or visit a website, both of which are controlled by the fraudsters.

Criminals are also texting people to tell them they will soon receive a call from their bank's fraud department.

Minutes later a scammer phones the victim claiming to be from their bank, and requests their login details.

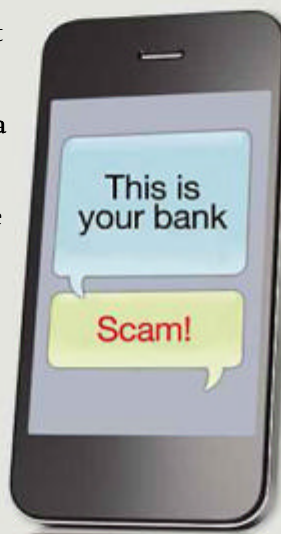
The spoof texts seem more authentic than most because the criminals use software that alters the sender ID to the name of a bank. This can result in some of the texts being added to existing message threads on the victim's phone, rather than appearing to come out of the blue.

What should you do?

The surest way to avoid falling for this scam is to avoid ringing any

numbers you see in suspicious text messages. Instead, write down your bank's phone number and keep it in a place close to hand, or search for it on your bank's official website. The number should also be on the back of your bank card.

It's also worth making a note of the type of information a bank will never ask you for. This includes your four-digit PIN and online banking password. Your bank will also never ask you to update your personal details by tapping a link in a text message. For more info on the scam visit FFA UK's website: www.snipca.com/16875.



New tools

Tracking Protection in Firefox
www.snipca.com/16845

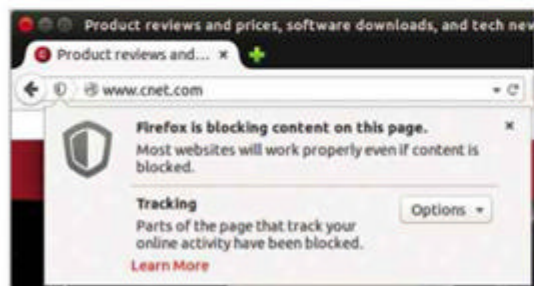
Blocking web cookies that track what you do online also helps web pages load much faster because they have to process less data. That's the conclusion of recent research carried out by Monica Chew, a former software engineer at Mozilla, and computer-science student Georgios Kontaxis. After testing Firefox's hidden Tracking Protection tool on 200 websites, they



saw a 44-per-cent drop in the time it took for web pages to load.

Tracking Protection is tucked away because it's one of Firefox's "experimental" features, and may therefore contain flaws. But it's a relatively low-risk way of trying to speed up your browsing (and it will definitely slash the number of websites that track you). You'll find instructions on how to enable it on Mozilla's

website – click the link above. Turning it on means ignoring a warning from Mozilla that sounds scarier than it should. You shouldn't worry; it's just Mozilla's way of covering itself. We've been using Tracking Protection for a while now, without any problems.



ScamWatch
READERS WARN READERS

Target of Crimestoppers con

I think I may have been targeted by a new scam. I received a call from someone who said he was representing Crimestoppers at the Home Office. The number that came up was 0800 555 111, which is the Crimestoppers number. I had been on the receiving end of con artists pretending to be from Microsoft, but I had never spoken to someone claiming to be from Crimestoppers. He started asking personal questions, which made me suspicious. I hung up, then searched for the scam online. Sure enough – Crimestoppers know all about it: www.snipca.com/16834.

Sidney Hicks



Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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SYSTEM TOOL

Resource Hacker 4.2

www.snipca.com/17143

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1



Customise your Windows menus and icons using this small and simply designed but extremely powerful tool that's been around almost as long as the internet. It's currently enjoying a spell of rapid change and had gone from version 4.2.0 to 4.2.3 just in the few days before this issue of *Computeractive* went to press, so if you're a fan of the program keep an eye on its website for the latest developments.

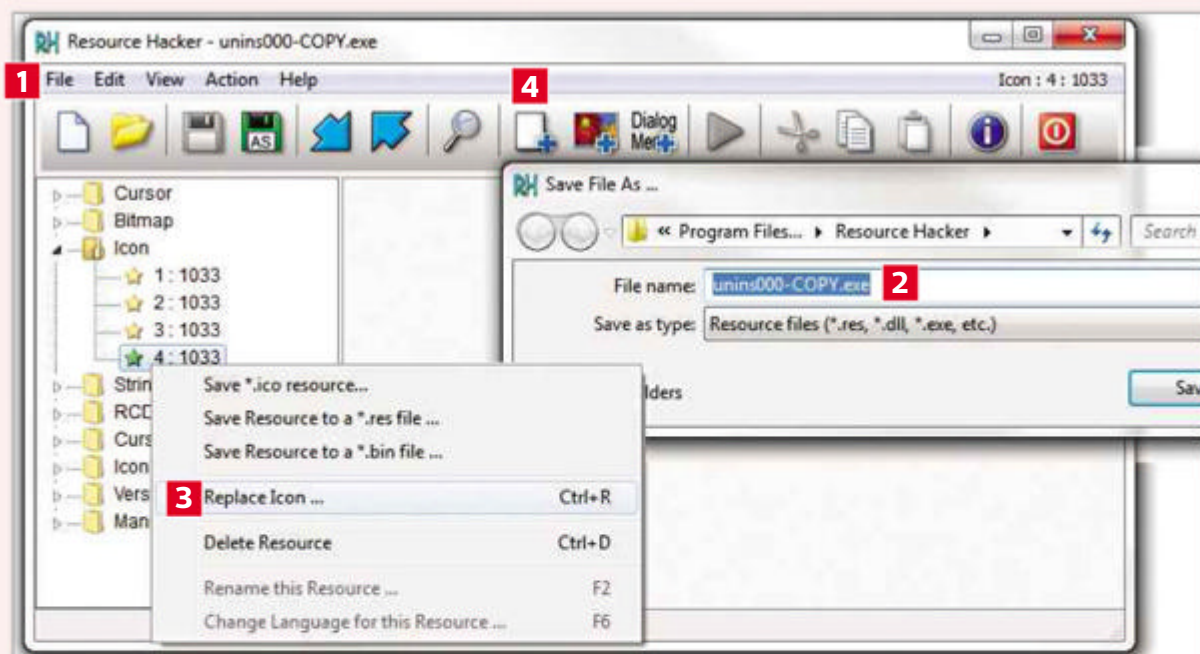
The most significant change is a new built-in tool for creating your own 'resources', using templates or from scratch. We know what you're thinking. What have resources got to do with customising icons? Normally when we talk about resources we mean **processor** power and memory – the stuff that powers your PC. But in this context, resources are system files like **DLLs** and **scripts** that determine how items look and behave.

Windows protects most system files so you can't change them, so to edit them in Resource Hacker you should copy the

files and move them to a new location where you can then tweak them to your heart's content. Then, if it works, replace the original file with the tweaked one.

Always save a **system restore point** before meddling with system files using this or any other tool. We'd also recommend giving Resource Hacker's Help pages a thorough read (click Help in the program window, then Contents), and check Microsoft's About Resource Files site (www.snipca.com/17144).

To download Resource Hacker, scroll right down the page and choose whether to get the installable version (click 'Setup executable') or the portable version (click 'Portable Zip file'). Both are very small, clocking in at under 3MB. We tested the installable version and found the setup wizard very quick and easy to run, with no adware or other unwanted extras to worry about.

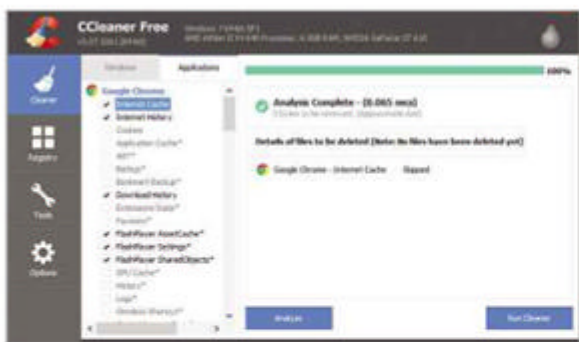


1 Click File, Open and choose a resource file to edit. Supported file types include EXE, DLL and SCR (script). The file's components open on the left as folders.

2 To create a copy of a system file so you can edit it, click File then Save As and choose a new name, such as the original name with '-COPY' added to it.

3 You can use Resource Hacker to change a file or program's icon. To do this, open the Icon folder tree, right-click the icon and select 'Replace Icon...' or press Ctrl+R.

4 To create a new resource from scratch, click the Blank Script icon. To create a resource using a script template, click the template icon ('Dialog Me').



PC CLEANER

CCleaner 5.07

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Our favourite PC-cleaning tool had its last major update in November (see Best Free Software, Issue 438) and we've seen numerous minor updates since. This is a medium-sized update; the next big one is likely to happen after Windows 10 arrives.

Version 5.07 adds Firefox Web Apps to its Startup cleaning tool; improves its Chrome **cache** cleaning and adds more support for the Windows 10 Preview, along with numerous 'minor bug fixes'.

By default, CCleaner's installable version runs when you launch Windows; this isn't necessary and may slow down your PC (it certainly slows down startup). You can prevent this by clicking Tools in CCleaner, then Startup and selecting CCleaner Monitoring under the Program list, then clicking Disable. For more tips on getting the best out of CCleaner, see page 58.



BROWSER

PolyBrowser 2.0

<https://polybrowser.com>

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8/8.1

Haven't decided what your second browser should be yet? There are loads of newcomers to choose from, including the feature-rich Vivaldi (Best Free Software, Issue 443) and Maxthon's stripped-back Nitro (Issue 451). PolyBrowser's unique selling point is what it calls 'panoramic navigation': open pages are stitched together in a row, so you scroll or swipe through them. They're also tabbed, so you can jump between them quickly. PolyBrowser is based on Firefox and supports most of that browser's **extensions**.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

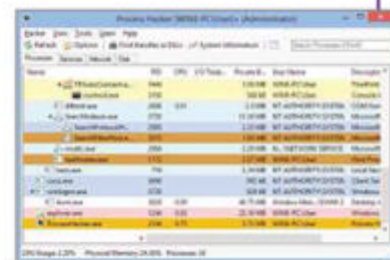
Is there a good alternative to Task Manager?

Q When I was using Windows XP, Task Manager was fine for sorting out crashes and other problems. But now I'm using Windows 8.1 and its Task Manager leaves me a little befuddled. Is there anything better I can use instead?

Stuart Pringle

A You're not alone in your befuddlement, Stuart. Windows Task Manager simply hasn't kept up with how we use our PCs in Windows 8.1 and beyond.

Our favourite alternative is Process Hacker (<http://processhacker.sourceforge.net>) – no relation to the more complicated Resource Hacker (see opposite page). Unlike Task Manager, Process Hacker lists all processes next to the program that triggered them, which instantly makes it easier to understand. Items are organised in a 'tree' format, so you can click a program to open up a list of its processes and then click it again to close them. This is especially useful if you use Chrome and programs by Adobe, whose processes tend to be scattered across Task Manager with no rhyme or reason.



Process Hacker is completely free and works on all versions of Windows from XP to 8.1, and there's a portable version – www.snipca.com/17147, click 'Binaries (portable)' – that you can store on a USB stick and run without installing.

Also look at Process Lasso (free from www.snipca.com/17148), which lets you create rules to prevent certain processes running under certain conditions.

Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

LAPTOP | £700 from www.snipca.com/16939

Chillblast Helios i5

Air on a shoestring? Sounds good to us

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Apple must be feeling fairly smug right now. Here's the latest rival product that, at first glance, looks like an Apple clone except for the missing fruit-shaped logo. It's even made of aluminium, not plastic, just like the real thing. Surely no coincidence?

On closer inspection, however, the Chillblast Helios is no MacBook Air. It has a few too many blobs and wiggles where Apple's chief designer Sir Jonathan Ive would have insisted upon straight lines. Inside, though, this lightweight laptop is more than a match, with twice the **RAM** and flash storage, and a higher-**resolution** screen than the 13in Air, which costs £150 more. In fact, in most respects it beats Apple's top-end £999 model.

“It apes the MacBook Air – and in some respects beats it”

At 1.8cm thick and 1.4kg, the chassis is just a fraction bulkier and heavier, but still easy to slip into a bag when out and about. And you don't need to rush back home either: we measured battery life at nine hours 18 minutes (of moderate use), not quite the Air's 12 hours, but excellent for a Windows machine.

And there's enough processing power to get through your work. The dual-core

Intel Core i5 **processor** will handle everyday documents, web browsing and photo management with ease, and a generous 8GB of memory lets you keep lots of windows open.

As with the Air, sacrificing the high capacity of a hard drive for the speed of an **SSD** cuts out the little pauses that can slow a PC down.

While the Air currently uses Intel's HD Graphics 6000, the Helios comes with the cheaper 5500, but there's probably only a 10 per cent difference in their respective performances. Still, we're not sure the sticker on the lid (bearing the slogan 'The power to play') is justified. You'd struggle to run the latest games on this laptop, and even older ones will require compromising tweaks in their settings. It would also struggle to carry out anything more than basic video editing. But a slimline system is not designed for such resource-sapping tasks.

Rather than the Air's two **USB 3.0** and two ultra-fast **Thunderbolt 2** ports, the Helios has one USB 3.0, one **USB 2.0**, an **Ethernet** and an **HDMI** port for connecting to a TV or monitor. That'll save you a few quid in Thunderbolt adapters. The latest **802.11ac** Wi-Fi is built in, so it'll work at top speed with wireless networks, and there's an **SD card** reader too.

The keyboard, with black tile keys (like a certain other computer), is nicely spaced and satisfying to type on. Just watch out for the power button, which sits invitingly next to the Delete key at the top right. Nobody makes touchpads quite like Apple's, and although we managed fine with swiping and clicking, gestures such as two-fingered scrolling

SPECIFICATIONS

2.2GHz Intel Core i5-5200U dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 250GB SSD • Intel HD Graphics 5500 • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 720p HD webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Windows 8.1 • 18x325x219mm (HxWxD) • 1.4kg • Five-year warranty
www.snipca.com/16939



felt a bit clunky and unresponsive. You can adjust the sensitivity, which helps.

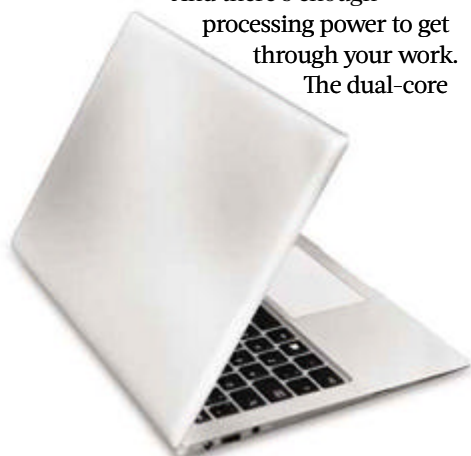
Despite the Retina displays on many of Apple's products, the MacBook Air has an old-fashioned 1600x900 pixels. The Helios provides 1920x1080, the same as a Full HD TV, so it looks sharper. But Windows 8.1 treats it as a standard-resolution screen rather than Retina, so everything appears slightly smaller. The display is bright and shows colours fairly accurately, and the matt coating means reflections are less distracting than on Apple's shiny screens.

One thing Chillblast can't match is the MacBook Air's lovely OS X operating system, with its neat simplicity, and relative freedom from viruses or constant updates. The Air can also run Windows, but adding it is an expensive undertaking. So if you want or need to stick with Microsoft, the Helios is a decent alternative at a lower cost.

VERDICT: Pricier than some comparable laptops, but cheaper than a MacBook, this is a more than adequate PC in an impressively compact design

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: MacBook Air 13in £849 Still the best, but unlike the Helios its 4GB memory can't be upgraded later; 8GB costs £80 extra when ordering



PC MONITOR | £350 from www.snipca.com/16946

Acer B326HUL

A screen with space to burn

If you have the room, a bigger display always looks better. The same cannot be said for bigger pixels – the smaller the better. Although more affordable 32in monitors are beginning to muscle in on 24 and 27in models, they often come with a relatively low resolution of 1920x1080 – fine for watching TV, not so good for Windows, especially when you're sitting close to the screen. Unfortunately, you tend to pay a lot more for monitors with higher resolutions.

“Not everyone will need a screen this big, but it offers sharp images, vibrant colours and great contrast”

The Acer B326HUL packs in 2560x1440 pixels. It's never going to compete with Apple's iMac 5K, which has twice as many pixels again (squeezed into a smaller 27in screen), but for £350 the B326HUL gives you sharp images, clear icons and legible text.

Sharp images still won't look great unless colour and contrast are up to scratch, and this is where budget monitors often fall down. Fortunately, this monitor has exceptional colour accuracy, with the sort of range that really brings out the more vibrant colours. It also has very high contrast levels, so detail in even the most subtle shades – such as darker areas in videos and photos – are clearly visible.



Because of its sheer size, this metallic-style monitor is a rather obtrusive presence, and despite its flat design, the 348x264mm base requires a substantial amount of free desk space. You'll ideally want to sit a little further away than you normally would, or you'll be constantly swivelling your head to see the furthest edges of the screen. Helpfully, you can adjust the height by anything up to 15cm, and a built-in turntable lets you point it in the direction of your choice, or swing it around to show others something on screen.

Four **USB 3.0** ports – two on the side and two on the back – connect keyboards, mice and USB drives to your PC. For video input there are two **HDMI** sockets, one **DisplayPort** (for Mac users) and one standard **DVI** monitor port.

Not everyone will need a screen this big, but for those who want even bigger, there are 34in 'ultrawide' monitors, for example, with the same 1440-pixel height but a 3440-pixel width (providing a handy alternative to using two separate displays). Or you could choose a 4K (3840x2160-pixel) model such as Philips' elegant BDM4065UC (See our review, Issue 446). For the price, though, the B326HUL is a great choice and really good value.

SPECIFICATIONS

32in • 2560x1440-pixel resolution • 2x HDMI ports • 1x DVI port • 1x DisplayPort • 4x USB 3.0 ports • Stereo speakers • 436x738x62mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/16946

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User* and *Micro Mart* and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: At 32in this impressive display will need a lot of room, but its high-quality specifications guarantee that bigger is better in this case



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung S32D850T £442 Another great 32in monitor with similar specifications, pipped by the Acer on price alone



Reviews

SMARTWATCH | £149 from www.snipca.com/16977

Pebble Time

A smarter choice of watch?

Pebble is one of the success stories of Kickstarter, the website where consumers pay in advance to help inventors develop new products. Having sold over a million smartwatches, starting years before Apple, the company now has more than enough money from Silicon Valley investors to make whatever it wants. Even so, it returned to Kickstarter to launch its third model, currently being shipped out to backers and available soon to everyone else.

“Apps live on the watch itself, which means you can do more when you don't have your phone”

The Pebble Time is about the same size as the larger of the Apple Watch's two cases, and less chunky than many rivals. Its rounded shape is a change from the earlier Pebble Steel, which seemed designed more for ninja combat than comfort. Even with three buttons at the right and one at the left, it feels uncluttered, although the plastic case and flat steel bezel lack a little class. If you want an all-metal watch like Apple's, you'll have to wait for the pricier Pebble Time Steel. Your choice of straps, however, is unlimited: any standard 22mm band will fit.

The Apple Watch is rated **IPX7**, which means it's fine in the rain but not recommended for swimming. The Pebble Time meets the roughly similar '30 metres' standard. We wouldn't go scuba diving in it, but an occasional dunking won't hurt it.

Once charged, your Pebble Time will



run for five to seven days. The Apple Watch, by comparison, needs charging every night. Yet the Time's screen is permanently on, rather than just when you raise your wrist. The trick is in its 'e-paper' display technology. The trade-off is that the face looks much duller, with large pixels and limited colours. It's also quite small, with a big empty border inside the bezel. While LCDs can be hard to read in bright light, e-paper relies on it; in the dark, you'll need to press the left button, or shake your wrist, to activate the backlight,

which also comes on whenever you receive a notification.

Receiving notifications is really what smartwatches are designed for. This is especially true of the Time, which doesn't even have a touchscreen. Its built-in apps aren't hard to navigate using the Up and Down buttons, but you wouldn't want to try anything

too complicated. Voice recognition, a new feature for Pebble, lets you dictate messages. This worked well when we tested it, but actually sending the messages from our Android phone was glitchy. This feature isn't yet supported on iPhones.

Plenty more apps are available, although most were created for previous Pebbles, and only work in black-and-white. For us, a few of them didn't work

at all. Apps live on the watch itself, rather than on your phone (something that Apple has avoided for the second version of its Watch software). This means you can do more when you don't have your phone with you, and the earlier eight-app limit is gone; you'll have room to install dozens. Apps can use Bluetooth to communicate with other devices, and can access the Time's built-in pedometer for health and fitness functions. But there's no heart-rate monitor built in.

Pebble's redesigned user interface presents everything in a timeline. Press Down to see that day's events, along with the weather forecast; press Up to see what's already happened, such as missed calls and yesterday's pedometer reading. Like Apple's Glances feature, this smacks of a nice idea in search of a purpose. The alert vibrations aren't as obvious as Apple's 'taptics', and the Time has no speaker, so you may have to rely on a glance at your wrist when you hear your phone.

The Pebble Time isn't perfect, but at half the price of Apple's cheapest option it's a distinctively different wrist device with a good reputation.

VERDICT: Even if the screen looks like it fell out of the 1980s, this is a solidly functional watch at a much lower price than the Apple Watch

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Asus ZenWatch
£175 Slimmer, shinier and elegantly curved, this Android Wear watch has a fingertip pulse monitor but only 24-hour battery life



SPECIFICATIONS

140x168-pixel colour e-paper display • Bluetooth 4.0
• 40.5x37.5x9.5mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty
• Requires a device with iOS 7 or later or Android 4 or later www.snipca.com/16978

LAPTOP-TABLET | £400 from www.snipca.com/16968

Asus Transformer Book T100 Chi

A laptop and tablet – but is it really two for the price of one?

In Michael Bay's films, Transformers change from run-of-the-mill cars into giant fighting robots. Asus, on the other hand, has now turned a decent hybrid laptop into a run-of-the-mill hybrid laptop.

The original T100 was one of the best of these 'two-in-one' machines, which can be used as a tablet by detaching the keyboard. The new version looks similar, but the prongs that previously transferred data between keyboard and screen now just hold them together, while the two elements now connect wirelessly via Bluetooth. That might provide more flexibility, but it means you'll have to recharge the keyboard separately every

few weeks. The main unit's battery lasts about nine hours.

The keyboard isn't great to type on, and the whole thing weighs over a kilo, so it's no iPad Air. Although the screen is sharp, it lacks colour fidelity, and text and icons in Windows look too small, unless you're using an app like Google Chrome or Microsoft Office that scales things well. A Bluetooth stylus is included for writing and drawing. Annoyingly, the single USB port is a dinky Micro-B, needing an adapter to connect a mouse or USB stick.

Unlike an Apple or Android tablet, the T100 runs Windows 8.1, but thanks to just 2GB of RAM and a low-end Intel Atom processor that's barely faster than last year's model, it struggles with multiple apps and even web pages. Superficially, this is a slick machine, but it's also flawed.



VERDICT: A full-blown Windows PC in convertible tablet form could be very practical, but this one isn't

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Microsoft Surface 3 £420 The keyboard is optional, so this Windows tablet is more expensive



SPECIFICATIONS

1.46GHz Intel Atom Z335 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 64GB SSD • 10.1in 1920x1200-pixel screen • 2-megapixel webcam • 5-megapixel rear camera • 802.11n • Windows 8.1 • 174.5x265x22mm (HxWxD) • 1.08kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16975

PC | £130 from www.snipca.com/16967

Zotac Zbox Nano Ci321

A DIY media PC at a blockbuster price



£130 for a PC? Not quite: before this little black box will run any software, you'll need to get out your screwdriver and add some memory and a hard drive. A 'Plus' version is also available, though hard to find, with 4GB of RAM and a 64GB SSD already installed for an extra £100.

The maximum RAM is 16GB, but we could only find one slot, limiting it to 8GB in practice. Storage is in the standard 2.5in laptop format, and uses a SATA interface rather than the newer and rarer mSATA, so you won't struggle finding cheap hard drives, SSDs and hybrid drives (a combination of the other two) on the market.

Apart from price, the Zbox's appeal is that it's tiny and – with no fans and an external power adapter – completely silent, except for a little hard-drive clicking if you choose to use one. Mount it on the

back of an HDTV or monitor (a bracket is supplied) and you have a home entertainment centre. An HDMI socket is built in, along with four USB 3.0 ports, Ethernet and fast 802.11ac Wi-Fi for streaming and Bluetooth 4.0 for remote control.

The Intel Celeron processor is better than the Atom CPUs found in some compact PCs and copes with Full HD films and web browsing. But it's only about half as fast as a Core i3, and not really up to resource-hungry tasks or playing 3D games. To run Windows 8, you'd need to buy the full (not upgrade)

SPECIFICATIONS

1.1GHz Intel Celeron 2961Y • 1x SATA 6Gbps interface • 4x USB 3 ports • 2x Ethernet ports • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • HDMI port • DisplayPort • 424x190x490mm (HxWxD) • Five-year warranty www.snipca.com/16965



version for around £80. A better idea might be to install a version of Linux, such as Ubuntu, which is free, and offers plenty of apps.

VERDICT: If you don't mind installing some components and an operating system yourself, this is a neat and flexible multimedia machine

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Acer Revo One RL85 £230 Ready to use with Windows installed, this desktop cube is a better choice for everyday computing



Reviews

TABLET | £150 from www.snipca.com/16980

Vodafone Tab Prime 6

A tablet made for mobile data

Most tablets can only get on the internet via Wi-Fi; they don't have a **SIM** for mobile data like a smartphone. But that may not matter too much, because most people who have tablets also have smartphones, and most smartphones can function as a personal hotspot. Wherever you can get a signal, your phone can act as a Wi-Fi network for your tablet to connect to.

So why bother making a budget tablet with its own **4G** SIM? Well, if you happen to run a mobile network, you probably know that, while there isn't much money to be made selling cheap tablets, there's plenty to be made from expensive data tariffs.

Enter Vodafone's Tab Prime 6, which runs Android 5 (Lollipop). On a pay-as-you-go contract it costs £150. Compare that to £419 for the iPad Air Wi-Fi + Cellular, Apple's cheapest full-size tablet with 4G, and it sounds like a good deal. By signing up for a monthly tariff, you can get the Tab Prime 6 for free, which by our maths is infinity per cent cheaper than the iPad. Now that sounds like a *great* deal!

When you work out how much you end up paying, though, it comes to £744 for a two-year contract. You'd have to be spending a lot of time away from Wi-Fi to



justify that kind of outlay. And the problem is, this isn't a tablet you're going to want to spend a lot of time using.

At first glance, the Tab Prime 6 ticks a lot of boxes: at 7.9mm thick and 406g, it's a similar size to the Air and even lighter than the more expensive Air 2. Although it's more plasticky, its soft-touch rear panel is less slippery to hold.

“Unlike the iPad, it pushes boundaries in the wrong direction”

But switch on the 9.6in display and you'll see just 1280x800 pixels, more like the very first iPad than the latest models. To make matters worse, it covers little more than half the iPad's colour range and isn't very bright. Everything looks fuzzy, block-like, washed-out and dim. If you're choosing a photo for your background wallpaper, try to pick something green – it can just about manage green.

Apple has always pushed the boundaries of mobile performance with the iPad. The Tab Prime 6 also pushes a boundary, but it's the one that separates the processing ability of a tablet and a roof tile. The Tab Prime 6 is about half as powerful as the Tesco Hudl 2 (see our Review, Issue 435) – an excellent budget tablet you can buy for under £100, albeit

without 4G. As a result, web pages judder uncertainly into place, and even 2D games stutter. Forget about the iPad's console-quality 3D experience.

More basic Android apps work all right. Battery life is decent, at eight hours 44 minutes in our tests, and the 16GB of built-in storage can be expanded with a **microSD** card of up to 32GB. The 5-megapixel camera on the back is poor, but thanks to the low display quality you won't really notice. A 2-megapixel front camera handles video chat.

The Tab Prime 6 is very affordable on pay-as-you-go, especially if you bypass Vodafone's business model by not topping up and sticking to Wi-Fi. But there are good reasons to spend more for a really good Android tablet like Google's Nexus 9, or even an iPad. You'll get more value out of something that works well.

If you need to keep the cost down, and can do without 4G, the even cheaper Hudl 2 is a better choice. The Tab Prime 6 may look at first glance like a reasonably priced tablet, but once you turn it on and try to use it, you won't think you've got much of a bargain.

VERDICT: iPads are expensive, but it's hard to make a tablet for substantially less without sacrificing the usability that makes them attractive – as this one demonstrates

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: iPad Mini 2 16GB Wi-Fi + Cellular **£339** Apple's nearest equivalent has a smaller screen for over twice the price

SPECIFICATIONS

9.6in 1280x800-pixel screen • 5-megapixel rear camera • 2-megapixel front camera • Android 5 • 802.11n • 3G/4G • 146x244x7.9mm (HxWxD) • 406kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/16979



PRINTER | £123 from www.snipca.com/16959

Dell E514dw

A cheap, quick laser printer for home or office

This multifunction printer (MFP) can print, scan and photocopy. Faxing isn't included, but the 1990s are over, after all. It's essentially an E310dw A4 laser printer with a flatbed scanner on top, and on top of that is a 35-sheet automatic document feeder (ADF), so you can scan or copy a long document in one go. Or you can lift the lid and place a single item on the glass.

“Prints and copies were very good, with crisp and subtle shading”

The design is uncluttered, but not in an Apple way, more in an IKEA plastic storage bin way. Let's call it 'functional'. To keep dust out, the ADF folds shut when not in use, and the 250-sheet paper tray at the bottom is fully enclosed. A pull-down slot lets you feed a single sheet such as an envelope. The basic control panel provides a backlit two-line display and 12 squidgy buttons.

Dell's software detected the printer on our Wi-Fi network and installed it on our PC without fuss. It also configured Document Hub, a program that combines print and scan functions with access to online services such as Dropbox, although you can't scan to or print from these directly. Apps also exist for scanning and printing from your Android or Apple device.

Tested over the built-in Ethernet port, this was a quick printer, delivering five pages of text or graphics in 21 seconds,

SPECIFICATIONS

2400x600dpi maximum print resolution • 26ppm quoted speed • 600x1200dpi maximum scan resolution • PCL 6 • PostScript Level 3 • USB • Ethernet • 802.11n • 317x409x399mm (HxWxD) • 10.4kg • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/16960



including the time spent preparing the job. On 20 pages of text it reached 22.2 pages per minute, not far off the (inevitably optimistic) quoted speed. Like most fast printers, it wasn't quiet, with fans whooshing more intrusively when printing duples (double-sided). Copying a page took just 10 seconds for one page and 40 seconds for 10 pages, thanks to the ADF. Scanning an A4 page at 150 dots per inch took 18 seconds, while a 6x4in photo at a more detailed 600dpi took 22.

Generally, prints and copies were very good, with crisp text and subtle shading. But darker graphics and photos showed horizontal bands of uneven tone, a common mono laser failing. Scans were satisfactory, with crisp focus and well-preserved detail in dark areas, although colours were a touch drab.

After using up the stingy 700-page ink cartridge that's supplied, you can buy a 2,600-page replacement for £52. That gives running costs of 2p per page, which is good value for a basic printer. All told, there's not much to complain about here.

VERDICT: With relatively high speeds, decent results and fair costs, the E514dw is a good printer for the price

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Brother DCP-1610W £70 Its technical specs are slightly lower and it has no ADF, but otherwise this is a very similar printer and it's currently much cheaper



The best... Travel speakers

Betron Bluetooth Pop-up Speaker

£14 from www.snipca.com/17138

A bigger speaker makes more noise, so this tiny one expands for extra resonance, then compresses into a neat puck. It comes in lots of colours, and has a jack as well as Bluetooth, but only lasts 3.5 hours on a charge.



Divoom Voombox On Go

£37 from www.snipca.com/17137

Available in several colours, this Bluetooth speaker, like the BRV-1 and IKUtrax, includes a microphone so you can take calls without having to pick up your phone. As well as a lanyard rail, it has a tripod mounting thread, which fits some bike mounts. It's loud, but at 408g it's the heaviest speaker here.



Braven BRV-1

£100 from www.snipca.com/17132

It's expensive for a small speaker, but the BRV-1 is IPX7 water-resistant (falling in the pool won't hurt it) and super-tough. Its 12-hour battery can also charge your phone if necessary. Playing over Bluetooth or from an input jack, it gives a surprisingly rich sound.



Maxell IKUtrax

£29 from www.snipca.com/17136

This hand-sized speaker has NFC for easy connection to compatible phones, but works with others via Bluetooth too, or you can use a jack. The battery lasts up to eight hours. With a soft rubber finish and a rail to attach a strap, it's practical and good value.



Crafting PCs the Scan way: Specification. Service. Satisfaction.



Scan V1 Value System Home / Office PC

- Intel® Pentium® G3240 processor
- 4GB Corsair DDR3 1333MHz memory
- 500GB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£295 inc VAT

The V1 is a very capable entry-level system perfect from basic home/office tasks. It's based around the dual-core Intel® Pentium® G3240 processor, 4GB of RAM plus a 500GB hard disk.

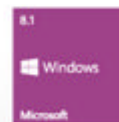


Scan V15 Value System Home / Office PC

- Intel® Core™ i5 4460 processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 1600MHz memory
- 1TB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£475 inc VAT

The V15 ups the ante by including a quad-core Intel® Core™ i5 4460 processor, so it makes light work of office and multimedia applications.



Scan G20 Value System Gaming PC

- Intel® Pentium® G3240 processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 1600MHz memory
- 2GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 750 Ti SSC
- 1TB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£479 inc VAT

Thanks to its dual-core Intel® Pentium® G3240 processor and NVIDIA GTX 750 Ti SSC graphics card the G20i is our most affordable gaming PC. It even includes surround sound!



Scan G30i Value System Gaming PC

- Intel® Core™ i5 4460 processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 1600MHz memory
- 2GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 960 SSC ACX
- 1TB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£675 inc VAT

The combination of quad-core Intel® Core™ i5 4460 processor and NVIDIA GeForce GTX 960 SSC ACX graphics card ensures that the G30i can play any game you throw at it.



Get the best of work and play with the new Windows.



Scan Value PCs

A range of computers perfectly suited for the home/office. These affordable PCs are very flexible workhorses, capable of every task, from email/web surfing to high-end applications such as photo editing, video encoding and gaming. All of our Value Systems are pre-built and soak-tested so are ready to ship for next-day delivery.



Finance Available on
PCs above £300



Built by award
winning 3XS team



Fully soak tested



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compatible



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2 Year Warranty
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Best Desktop PC

CUSTOMPC
AWARDS 2014
Highly Commended
Retailer

PC GAMER
EDITOR'S
CHOICE
★★★★★



The most awarded PCs and Laptops Period.



Scan 3XS Gamer 20i Gaming PC

- Intel® Core™ i7 4790 processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 2133MHz memory
- 4GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970 SC ACX
- 1TB Seagate HDD
- Windows 8.1
- 3 Year Premium Warranty

£1009 inc VAT

The 3XS Gamer 20i is a super-fast gaming PC thanks to its combination of quad-core Intel Core i7 4790 CPU running at 3.6GHz with added Hyper-Threading plus a 4GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970 graphics card. These components are installed in an Asus Z97-K motherboard along with a 1TB hard disk.



Scan 3XS Z97 Vengeance Gaming PC

- Intel® Core™ i7 4790K processor overclocked up to 4.7GHz
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 2133MHz memory
- 4GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 980 SC
- 250GB Samsung 850 SSD & 2TB HDD
- Windows 8.1
- 3 Year Premium Warranty

£1459 inc VAT

This high-end gaming system includes a water-cooled Intel Core i7 4790K CPU overclocked up to 4.7GHz plus a 4GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 980 graphics card, 8GB of 2133MHz Corsair Vengeance Pro DDR3, 250GB SSD for lightning quick gaming loading and a 2TB hard disk.



3XS Graphite LG157 Gaming Laptop

- Intel® Core™ i7 4720HQ processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 1600MHz memory
- 2GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 960M
- 15.6in 1,920 x 1,080 screen
- 1TB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£879 inc VAT

The LG157 is a 15.6" mid-range gaming laptop that includes a NVIDIA GeForce GTX 960M graphics card plus an Intel Core i7 4720HQ CPU, up to 16GB of RAM and multiple hard disks and SSDs. The LG157 is ready for next-day delivery and is protected by a 2 Year Premium Warranty.



3XS Graphite LG1720 Gaming Laptop

- Intel® Core™ i7 4720HQ processor
- 8GB Corsair DDR3 1600MHz memory
- 3GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970M
- 17.3in 1,920 x 1,080 screen
- 1TB SATA 6Gb/sec hard drive
- Windows 8.1

£1079 inc VAT

The LG1720 is a 17.3" high-end gaming laptop that includes a choice of powerful NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970M or 980M graphics card, ensuring silky smooth frame rates in all games. The LG1720 is ready for next-day delivery and has a 2 Year Warranty.



Scan Computers recommends Windows.

3XS Custom Series

Our 3XS Custom Series is a range of computers designed to offer the best performance for a variety of applications, with a particular focus on games. We build Custom Series PCs to order, so we can configure and tailor make an individual PC just the way you want it. We can also overclock the processor, so you get a faster PC without a substantial increase in price. All 3XS Custom Series PCs are covered by a three year warranty as standard with the first year on-site.



Scan 3XS
Overclocked



Built by award
winning 3XS team



3 Year
Warranty

3XS SYSTEMS

Some features require Windows 8.1. Update available through Windows Store. Internet access required; fees may apply. Some apps sold separately; vary by market. Prices correct at time of print and are subject to change.

Reviews

SMART PLUG | £79 (without contract) from www.snipca.com/17080

3rings Care 3rings Plug

A plug that reassures you a loved one is all right

Remember the days when you'd let your mum know you were OK by phoning and hanging up after three rings? If you do, your mum may be getting on a bit now, and you'd like to be sure *she's* OK. So tech entrepreneur Steve Purdham has invented a modern equivalent.

“The plug sends you a message saying the kettle was used, and your mum is fine”

A free app for Apple or Android walks you through the 3rings Plug's setup. At your elderly relative's house (or yours, if you are the elderly relative in this equation), you connect the sturdy unit between a mains socket and an appliance that's used daily, such as the kettle. The plug makes contact with the internet using a built-in mobile phone **SIM** – you don't need an internet connection or Wi-Fi network in the house.

SPECIFICATIONS

Smart plug with roaming SIM • Supports up to 13 amps • Monthly, annual or 2-year subscription
www.snipca.com/17084

In the app, you set up one or more times of the day when you'd expect the appliance to be used, such as breakfast time. At the end of each period, the plug sends you a message saying the appliance was turned on, meaning your relative is fine and dandy. Or if the appliance hasn't been used, the app demands you 'take responsibility' for checking on them.

The idea is that you invite family and friends to monitor along with you. But the app hasn't quite been thought through properly. What isn't made clear is that part of the setup has to be carried out via 3rings' website. The marketing blurb, which bangs on condescendingly about your 'ageing loved ones' pottering around making tea and watching telly, hardly helps. Some of us are over 75 and capable of reading up on technology for ourselves, Steve.

The point of three rings was to save on the cost of a call. But with 3rings, you pay £79 for the plug then £12 a month. It's cheaper if you pay for a year up front or sign up for 3rings' **crowdfunding** campaign on Kickstarter (www.snipca.com/17081, until 13 July). While many monitoring services cost more, this still seems a little expensive for just messages. And with no wired base unit, your peace of mind depends on mobile reception,



which isn't always reliable indoors – although it's good that it can use any available network.

VERDICT: Despite the clunky aspects and ongoing expense, this simple and unobtrusive monitor could work well for some people

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Age UK Personal Alarm Service **£83 (plus £4.16 per week)** A different approach: if all is not well, the elderly user presses a button on a pendant or wristband, and a central office takes action



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best value mono printer?

Q Born in the 1930s, I appreciate your 'plain English' approach – much better than magazines that use all the jargon but fail to get the message across. I need to replace my old faithful Samsung ML-1915 mono laser. I've tried colour printers, but I find it better to pop into the local photo shop when I need colour. What would you recommend for good value?

David Smith



A Samsung is still a good choice: the ProXpress M3320ND (£94 from www.snipca.com/17009 after cashback; pictured) is much faster, can print double-sided (duplex), and has both **USB 2.0** and **Ethernet** interfaces. Running costs are average, at £65 for a 3,000-page toner cartridge or £103 for 5,000 (2.1p to 2.2p per page, excluding paper). The M2825ND (£131 from www.snipca.com/17007) costs more, but toner

is cheaper. It only has one USB 2.0 connection and is slightly slower.

A cheaper option is the Brother HL-1110 (£48 from www.snipca.com/17010). It's limited to USB 2.0 and single-sided printing, and speed is more like your ML-1915. Toner is £22 for 1,000 pages, 2.2p per page, but you'll need a £35 replacement drum after 10,000 pages.

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Xara Web Designer Premium 11

Design your website without using code



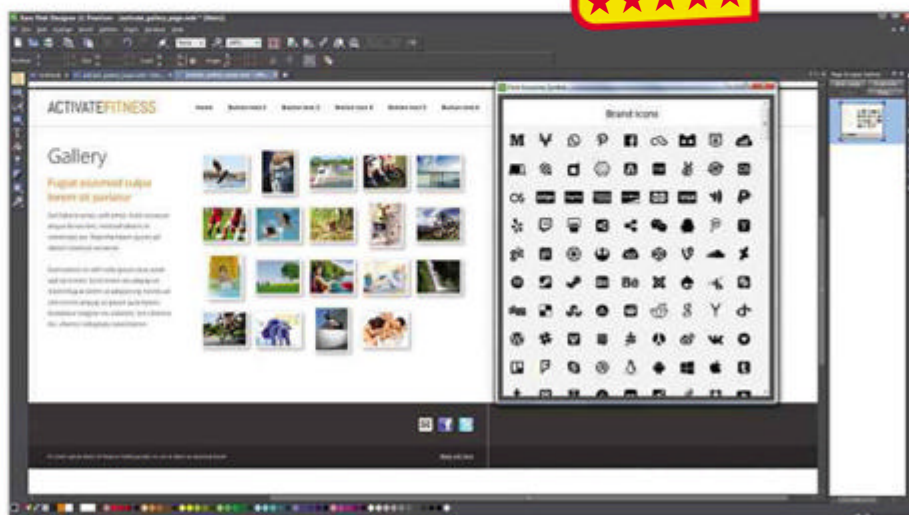
Most websites are created in one of two ways. You can set up your own web server, install a system such as WordPress, add a template and edit the HTML code yourself to create what you want. Or you can use a ready-made free service (like Tumblr) or paid-for ones (like Squarespace) that let you quickly set up a site, with a limited range of options, but without the hassle of servers or HTML.

A third way is to use a visual web-design program and Xara's Web Designer Premium 11 is the latest example. It makes creating a site more like laying out pages in a desktop publishing (DTP) program. You'll need your own server, which could be the web-hosting facility included with your broadband account. Alternatively, Premium 11 comes with a free hosting account that's simple to set up.

“Xara has made a stirring effort to keep up with current trends in web design”

Getting started is a doddle – just pick a theme, choose a colour scheme and type your text into the template. If design is your thing, you can always start with a blank page and take it from there. All the elements you need are ready to drag and drop into place: buttons and navigation bars to help visitors to your site get around, forms, sliders for photo galleries and ‘accordions’ for menus. ‘Widgets’ can incorporate information from external services such as social networks, YouTube, Flickr, AdSense, Google Maps and more.

The previous version added support for responsive design, meaning your site will reformat itself so it can be viewed properly on phones and tablets. That's even more important now that Google pushes sites that don't work well on mobile screens further down their search results.



Version 11 now addresses another modern requirement: the ability to edit your site's content from any web browser. This works via the cloud.xara service, which is still in beta, meaning there's more work to be done on it. At the moment, you can only edit text, replace photos and make small adjustments, but it's a step towards catering for sites that need regularly updating. It's not a substitute for a full content management system (CMS) such as WordPress, and bear in mind that if you create websites that other people need to edit, it's likely they will need to pay a subscription to do this. But the idea looks promising. You can also sync your site design via Dropbox or Google Drive, so if you use Xara Web Designer on different PCs you'll always have the current version.

Xara has made a stirring effort to keep up with current trends in web design. ‘Sticky’ navigation keeps buttons at the top of a page in place while the user scrolls through the text and pictures below. Social-networking icons hug the side of the browser window, encouraging your visitors to click and tell their friends about your site. A range of smooth HTML5 animations can make page elements fade or slide into view as the visitor scrolls down or hovers over them with their

cursor. You can also include edge-to-edge elements like the full-width hero graphics that welcome visitors to many sites.

For quicker editing, you can now set up autocorrect abbreviations for commonly used phrases and automatically create links to web addresses in text. On the design side, there's improved support for Google's free web fonts, instant site-wide font replacement so you can try different typefaces, and easy access to attractive icons from Font Awesome (www.fontawesome.io).

Xara Web Designer Premium 11 is a very usable tool with more features than you might expect. If you want to start smaller, the standard version is only £35; compare Premium and standard versions at www.snipca.com/16958.

VERDICT: Substantial new features and a promising cloud service push this comprehensive web-design program ahead of its rivals



ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8 £90 Our previous top pick is still a good choice, but Xara costs less and offers some impressive new abilities



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows Vista or later • 500MB of memory • 320MB of available hard-drive space www.snipca.com/16955

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE | £104 from www.snipca.com/16952

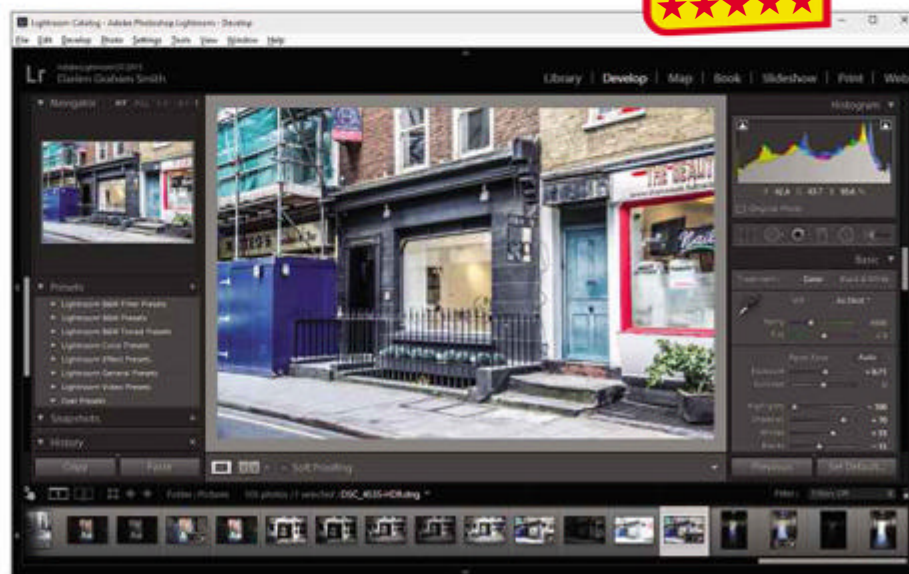
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6

Manage your photo collection like a pro



Most people have heard of Adobe's do-it-all image-editing program, Photoshop. But not everybody needs all of its features, which branch out into niche areas such as 3D printing. If you just want a professional way to organise and tweak your photos, especially if you have a **DSLR** camera, Lightroom is for you. Despite retaining 'Photoshop' in its name, it's a separate program entirely.

Those who can't decide between the two can pay £103 a year for a Creative Cloud Photography subscription, which covers both programs. That's pretty good value, but if you prefer to own rather than rent, you can buy Lightroom 6 outright for £104, or upgrade from Lightroom 5 for £59.



“It offers professional-level results and mobile integration”

Two years in the making, this full new version doesn't offer any huge changes, and in some ways that's a good thing. Lightroom is designed to put the tools you need at your fingertips, so that once you're familiar with them you can work quickly and efficiently. And to this end, facial recognition is now built in to help you sort through lots of pictures.

If you keep your photo library on a separate hard drive, for example because your laptop has limited storage, that's not a problem. Lightroom's Smart Previews let you see and even edit photos in your library when you're out and about without your external drive. It compresses copies for storage on your laptop, and these respond to colour corrections in the same way. Just keep an eye on pixel-level filters like sharpness and noise reduction, which may not come out quite the same when you reconnect your library and

your edits are applied to the original full-size images.

Less powerful PCs may struggle somewhat when processing multi-megapixel images. Especially so if your camera can produce **RAW** images (for which Lightroom offers even more colour and tone options). But Adobe has added **graphics acceleration** to help with this, and it even works with modest built-in hardware like the Intel HD Graphics 4400 in our laptop. You'll still want a fast Core i5 or i7 **CPU** to avoid waiting around.

You can also work on an iPad or Android tablet using the Lightroom Mobile app. Editing pictures from your main library relies on an internet connection, but you can still see them while offline. When you import photos from your camera to the tablet (you may need an adapter, such as Apple's £29 Lightning to SD Card Camera Reader, www.snipca.com/16957) they can be synced to your Lightroom library. This is handy for going through pictures you've just taken.

Lightroom 6 offers new features that let you combine multiple photos. You can stack several shots of the same scene to make an HDR (high dynamic range) image, with more dramatic or subtle colour variation, or you can merge a series of adjacent shots into a panorama. You don't get as much control as you would in

Photoshop, and HDR pictures are stored in ordinary 8bit colour, not 16bit. But in most cases you'll get good results.

Photoshop has lots of tools for precisely selecting areas of an image. That's good for designers, but photographers think more in terms of adding filters to the whole frame or applying a fade-off. Lightroom's Graduated and Radial filters work this way, and they now let you paint areas in or out of the filter.

All edits in Lightroom are non-destructive, meaning the original photo files are preserved and your changes can be tweaked or reversed at any time. Along with its professional approach and mobile integration, this makes it a program with no real rivals, and if you're serious about photography it's worth the money.

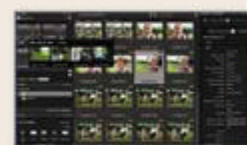
VERDICT: It's the choice of photo pros, but Lightroom is also suitable for beginners, and for tablet users the mobile app is a Godsend

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE:

ACDSee Pro 8
£46

The closest equivalent to Lightroom at a lower price, but it isn't as easy to use and has fewer features



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7 or later • 2GB memory (8GB recommended) • 1GB of video memory • 2GB of available hard-drive space • Also available for Mac OS X 10.8 or later www.snipca.com/16950

WIRELESS MUSIC STREAMER | £50 from www.snipca.com/16983

Crystal Acoustics Widaptor

A cheaper way to play music wirelessly around your house

There are several ways to play music wirelessly to different rooms in your house, while controlling it all from a smartphone or tablet. Narrow them down to those that are easy to set up (for example, Sonos) and cost no more than £50 (certainly not Sonos) and your options are much more limited. Crystal Acoustics' Widaptor, however, promises to tick both these boxes.

The neat black plastic casing, a little smaller than a pack of slim cigars, has a rubberised finish and would look great – if it didn't have writing all over it. But you can easily tuck it away out of sight somewhere near your speaker or hi-fi. Along its sides you'll find 3.5mm audio input and output jacks, an Ethernet



server software. Alternatively, on your iPhone or iPad, you can select a Widaptor from the AirPlay options in Control Center. At least, that's the theory. It didn't work for us.

Its big appeal is the 'multi-room' feature: the ability to hook up two or more Widaptors in different places, give them different names and send audio to them independently. We found this simple to set up, thanks to the instruction manual and WPS button, and it worked flawlessly.

Although audio is received digitally by the Widaptor, its only output is analogue, which limits sound quality. And its low price excludes a mains adapter, so you'll need to use your own USB charger. It's easy to see where corners have been cut to make it affordable, but for everyone except serious audiophiles, this is a quick and simple way to get multi-room audio.

“ Its big appeal is the multi-room feature, but sound quality is limited ”

network socket, a microUSB port and a full-size USB-A socket. Wi-Fi is built in, with a WPS button to make it easy to connect to your network.

Simply hook up the Widaptor to your network (using Wi-Fi or an Ethernet cable), then to an amplifier or a set of powered speakers, and you can then use the free WiSound app (for iOS and Android) to stream music to it. Services like Spotify and Pandora are supported as well as the built-in music apps (Apple Music is currently not available to any streaming product). You can also use a Mac, PC or Android device with DLNA

SPECIFICATIONS

1x USB port • 1x Ethernet port • 802.11ac • 1x analogue out jack • 1x line-in jack • Supports DLNA, UPnP • 83x83x25mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty
www.snipca.com/16983



VERDICT: Not one for the audio purists, but the Widaptor lets the rest of us stream music around the house with touchscreen control for a relatively affordable £50 per room

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Pure Jongo A2 £100

This Wi-Fi-only box connects your hi-fi or speakers to the Pure Connect app and can be expanded to a Jongo multi-room system

COMING SOON

SUMMER 2015

Lenovo, which bought Motorola last year, has hinted at "exciting products, including phones and watches" coming soon. That's likely to include a new version of the Moto 360 smartwatch, as well as Moto G or X phones.



SUMMER 2015

Apple Pay, which lets you pay at tills or online using an iPhone 6 or 6 Plus, iPad Air 2 or iPad mini 3 or Apple Watch, will be available in the UK from some time in July. In shops it'll be limited to £20, and Barclays customers won't be able to use it until a later date.



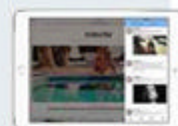
JULY 2015

Windows 10 arrives on 29 July. It'll be a free upgrade if you currently have Windows 7 or 8 installed, and you can 'reserve' it now (www.snipca.com/16890). Windows 10 will be priced £99.99 for XP and Vista users.



AUTUMN 2015

iOS 9 will be a free upgrade for any iPhone or iPad that can currently run iOS 8. Among lots of new features, you'll be able to 'slide over' a different app while still seeing the one you're using. With the iPad Air 2, you can even run two apps side by side.



NEXT ISSUE

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22 July



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Making home monitoring fun



Chromebook Pixel (2015)
Google's answer to the MacBook

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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H
£280 from www.snipca.com/16158
Tested: Issue 446



Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop. Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance, respectably lengthy battery life and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE **Asus Chromebook C200**
A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard.
£200 from www.snipca.com/16705

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Kaveri Evolution
£500 from www.snipca.com/16354
Tested: Issue 422



A budget PC with a fast overclocked processor. It also has good upgrade potential and comes with a surprisingly good 24in monitor, as well as a quality USB keyboard and mouse.

ALTERNATIVE **Chillblast Fusion Rhino**
A very powerful and compact PC sold without a keyboard, mouse or monitor.
£929 from www.snipca.com/17090

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 2
£239 from www.snipca.com/14467
Tested: Issue 416



Apple's mini tablet from 2013 is now available at an even lower price. The only thing it lacks compared with the Mini 3 is a fingerprint sensor and the option of lots of built-in storage. Otherwise, it's an absolute bargain.

ALTERNATIVE **Apple iPad Air 2 A**
thin and lightweight 10in tablet with a fingerprint reader, an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from www.snipca.com/16717

PHONE

Motorola Moto G 4G
(second generation)
£150 (without contract) from www.snipca.com/16160
Tested: Issue 436



Moto G 4G has been updated with a 5in screen, 4G and a microSD card slot. The 3G version has dual SIM slots.

ALTERNATIVE **Apple iPhone 5s** An excellent smartphone with a great camera and performance. £459 without a contract from www.snipca.com/10171

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6
£219 from www.snipca.com/16355
Tested: Issue 405



This compact, interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE **Sony A5000** A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good.
£251 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Kobo Aura H20
£140 from www.snipca.com/15490
Tested: Issue 435



A waterproof e-reader with an easy-to-read, high-resolution touchscreen that's easy on the eyes and great for reading in the bath. There's no 3G version, but, unlike the Amazon Kindle, you can buy ebooks from independent retailers that use the ePub format.

ALTERNATIVE **Amazon Kindle Voyage**
The best Kindle yet, with a sharp, extremely responsive touchscreen and easy-grip design. £169 from www.snipca.com/14451



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SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from www.snipca.com/14212

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2015 has won our past four antivirus tests – an unprecedented set of results. The 2015 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/14221.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

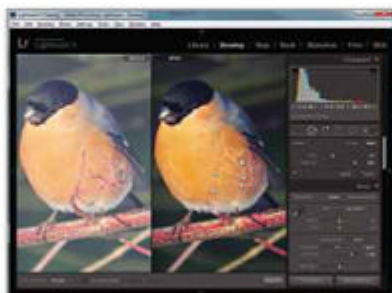
Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5

£110 from www.snipca.com/16356

Tested: Issue 402



Lightroom is a consistently elegant, powerful and fast photo-management program packed with sophisticated features. If you want to keep on top of your photos and make them look great, there's no better software to do it with.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

A fast and polished photo-editing program with excellent advanced editing tools. £64 from www.snipca.com/16357

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 5 dLAN 1200+ Wifi ac Starter Kits from Devolo



Devolo makes some of the best Wi-Fi equipment around. In Issue 450, we gave a five-star Buy It! award to its new HomePlugs, and here we're giving away five dLAN 1200+ Wifi ac Starter Kits. Using these super-fast HomePlug adapters you can create a powerful home network over your power line. You can hit speeds of up to 1,200Mbps, guaranteeing lightning-fast internet. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk by midnight 7 July.

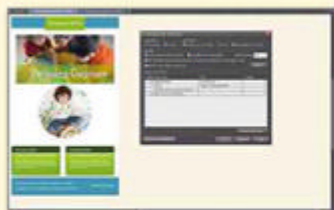
Devolo's dLAN 1200+ Wifi ac Starter Kit is available to buy now priced £159.99 from www.snipca.com/16819. For more information on Devolo's products visit www.devolo.com, and follow Devolo on Twitter @devoloUK.

WEB DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 11

£70 from www.snipca.com/16955

Tested: Issue 453



This visual web-design program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be 'responsive', meaning they look right on both big and small screens without extra work. A basic version is also available for half the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8

Comes with lots of templates, but creates separate desktop and mobile versions instead of responsive sites, and can be slow to use. £90 from www.snipca.com/14964

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£110 from www.snipca.com/15855

Tested: Issue 427



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC

More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £200 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

£140 from www.snipca.com/16187

Tested: Issue 449



This two-drive NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j

A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £253 from www.snipca.com/16707

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Workshops & Tips

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Issue 453

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

35 Use Windows 10's superb new browser
38 Record how many steps you walk

40 Remove duplicate files for free
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PLUS

43 Readers' Tips
44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For... VLC

Use Windows 10's superb new browser

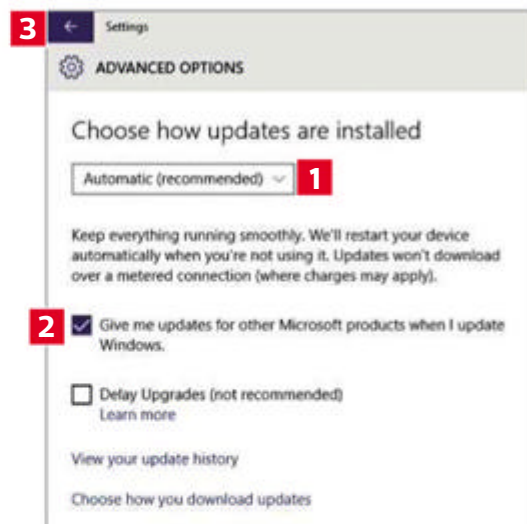
What you need: Windows 10 Preview **Time required:** 1 hour

When we first featured Microsoft's new browser (See 'Use Microsoft's new Spartan browser' on page 38 of Issue 448) it was a barebones version that wasn't suitable for everyday use. The company has since renamed the browser Microsoft Edge

and added many new features. These include a 'New tab' page, private browsing mode and speaker icons on tabs playing audio. You can now customise the web pages that open at startup, pin websites to your Start menu and change the layout of your Reading list.

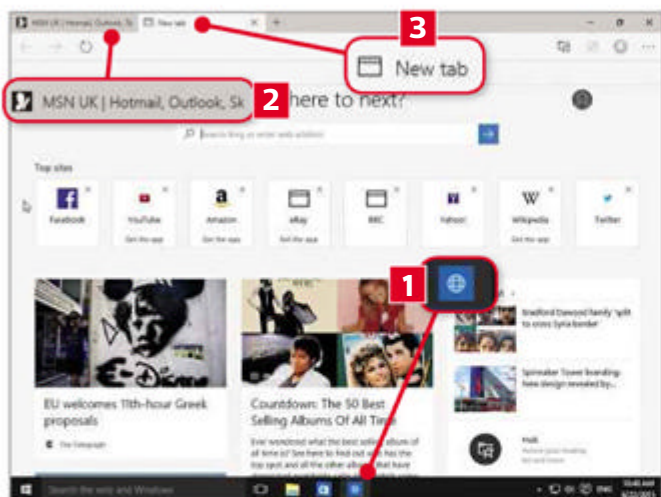


STEP 1 If you still haven't installed the Windows 10 Technical Preview, refer to our lead Workshops in Issues 443 and 444 for instructions. You can only use Microsoft Edge with the latest version of the Windows 10 Technical Preview (Build 10130, at the time of writing). Your build number is displayed at the bottom right of your screen **1**. To update your version of Windows 10, click the Start button **2**, Settings, 'Update & security' **3**, then click the 'Advanced options' link.

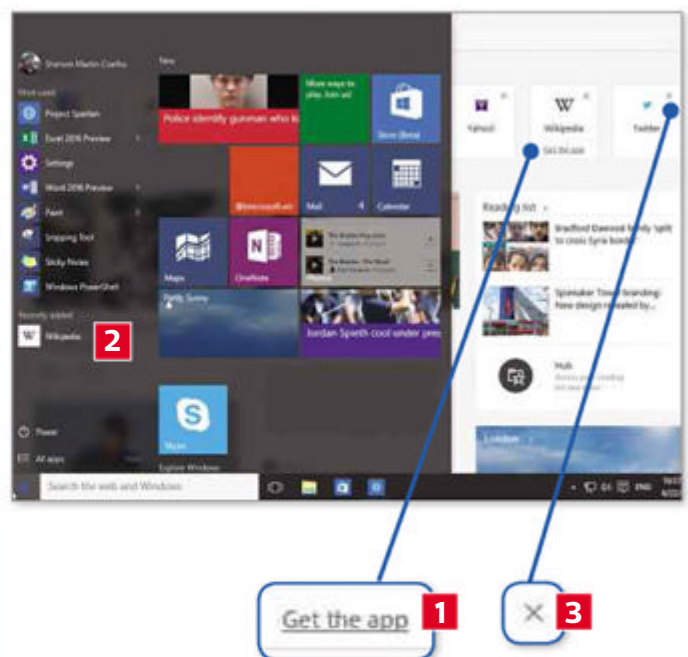


STEP 2 Choose 'Automatic (recommended)' **1** from the dropdown menu at the top, tick the box below **2**, then scroll to the bottom of the screen and select Fast in the dropdown menu there (this lets you test new Windows features as soon as they're released). Now click the Back button **3**, then 'Check for updates'. Windows will now download and install the latest Preview. This process can take up to an hour, depending on the speed of your internet connection. When that's done, Windows will restart several times before automatically booting to the latest version.

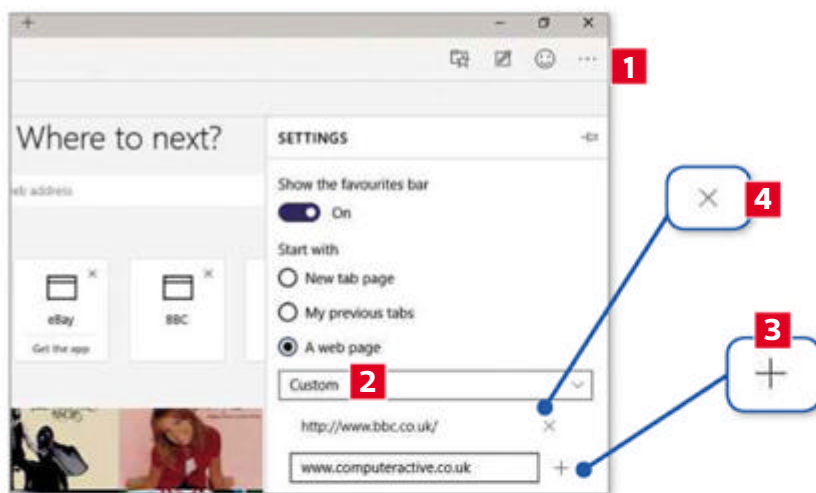
Workshops



STEP 3 Open the browser by clicking the blue square icon **1** on your Taskbar (it's still called Project Spartan in the Preview but will be changed to Microsoft Edge via future updates). The browser opens with two tabs - the MSN UK website **2** and a 'New tab' **3**. Open the latter to see a URL/Bing search engine field and a 'Top sites' section featuring tiles for the likes of YouTube, Amazon, and BBC that you can click to open. Below that you'll see news, sports, entertainment, lifestyle and health articles from Sky News, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and the Press Association.

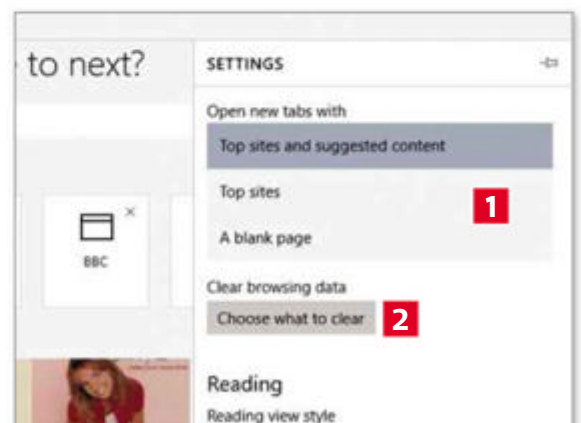


STEP 4 Some tiles (such as Amazon, YouTube and Wikipedia) contain a 'Get the app' link **1**. Click it to download that app from the Windows Store. Downloaded apps will appear in the Recently Added section **2** of the Start menu. Close any of the 'Top sites' tiles **3** if you'd rather not see them.

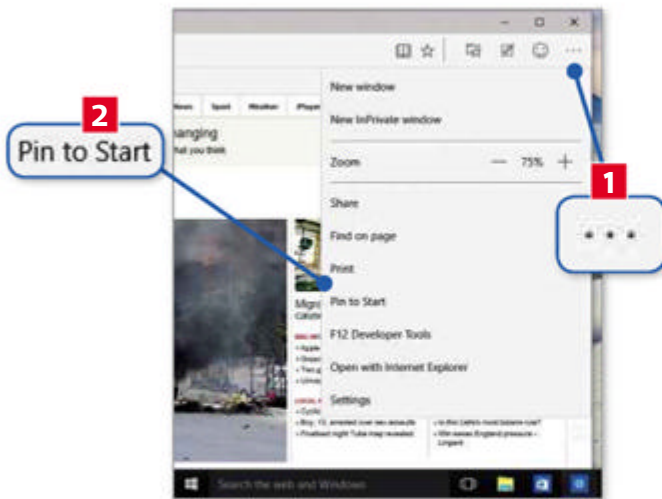


STEP 5 If you'd rather open Microsoft Edge with other web-page tabs, you can customise the browser's default settings. To do that, click the three dots **1**, then Settings at the bottom and look at the 'Start with' column. Here, you can select 'New tab page' (see Step 3), 'My previous tabs' (the tabs you closed during your last browsing session) or 'A web page'. The last option gives you a dropdown menu with three options - MSN, Bing and Custom. To open on a specific web page, select Custom **2**, then type the URL of the website (such as www.bbc.co.uk/). You can click the '+' symbol **3** to add more websites and the X **4** to remove them.

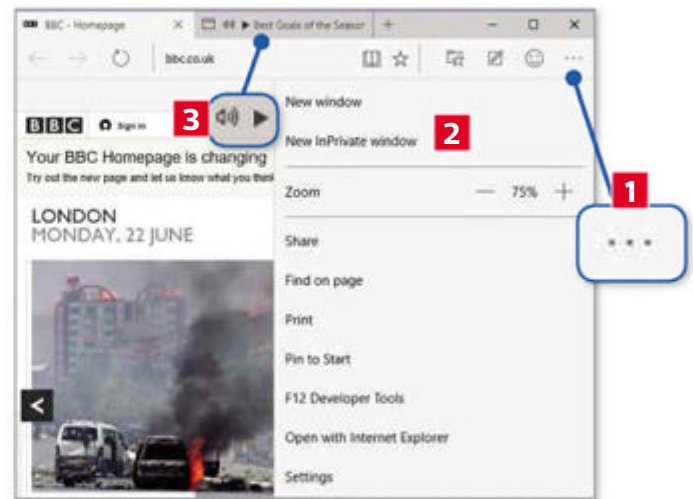
STEP 6 You can also set how new tabs open. Look under the 'Open new tabs with' column. By default, the dropdown menu is set to 'Top sites and suggested content', but you can change it to only see the 'Top sites' or a blank page **1**. To delete your browsing activity, click the 'Choose what to clear' button **2**. You'll see a list of items with tickboxes (including 'Browsing data', 'Download history', 'Form data' and Passwords). Select the ones you want to delete, then click the Clear button.



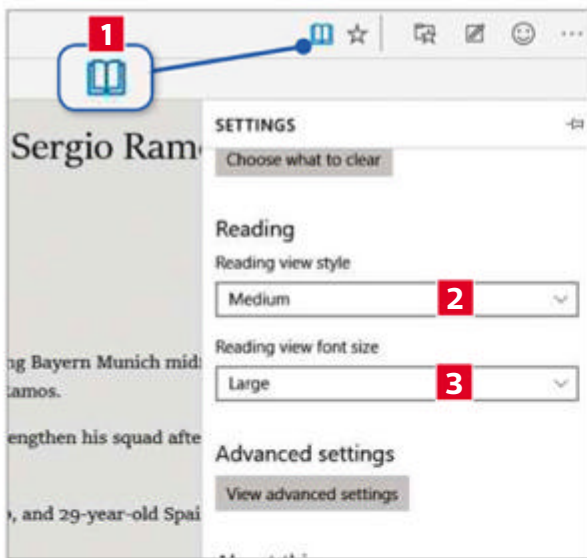
Use Windows 10's superb new browser



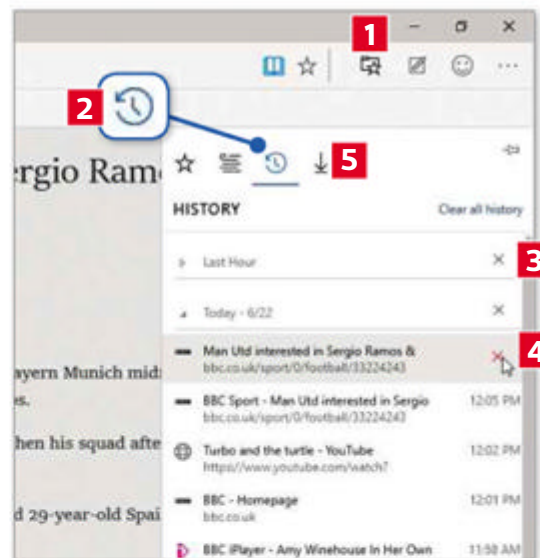
STEP 7 Another new feature is the ability to pin websites to the Start Menu. First, open a website you want to pin, click the three dots **1**, then click 'Pin to Start' **2**. To access these pinned websites, open the Start menu, then scroll to the bottom of the right-hand (tiled) column. You can reposition the website's tile by clicking and dragging it wherever you want. To resize it, right-click the tile, move your cursor to Resize, then select a size (Small or Medium).



STEP 8 Another new feature of Microsoft Edge is private mode. This is similar to the Incognito mode in Chrome, where no information (browsing history, passwords, forms you fill, etc.) will be saved by the browser. To open a private window, click the three dots **1**, then click 'New InPrivate window' **2**. A new browser window will open with a blue InPrivate tile at the top left. You can now also easily identify tabs playing audio, which is useful if you have lots of tabs open and you don't know which is playing that irritating advert, for example. Any noisy tabs now display a speaker and a play icon **3**.



STEP 9 In Issue 448, we showed you how to use Reading View, which strips away all the adverts and links from articles and lets you save them to read later. To instantly see an article in this view, click the book icon **1**. This latest Build lets you customise Reading View using three themes and four font sizes. Click the three dots at the top right, Settings at the bottom, then scroll to the Reading section. You can choose from four default 'Reading view styles' **2** and four font sizes **3** using those dropdown menus. Reading view styles (basically background colours) include Default (light yellow), Light (white), Medium (grey) and Dark (black background/white text). The four font sizes are Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large.



STEP 10 The Hub icon **1** also has new features. You can now click the new History icon **2** to view all the web pages you've visited in various time periods (including Last Hour, Today, Yesterday, and Last Week). You can delete all the pages within that time frame **3** or individually delete selected web pages by moving your cursor to it, then clicking the x beside it **4**. To clear your entire browsing history, click the 'Clear all history' link. Click the Download icon **5** to see a list of all the files you've downloaded. After doing that, you can click the 'Open folder' link to open the Downloads folder on your PC. ●

Record how many steps you walk

What you need: Android phone or iPhone **Time required:** 15 minutes

Your smartphone has built-in GPS, which means it's easy to turn it into an activity tracker. Here, we'll show you how to use two superb free apps for Android and iOS that record how many steps you walk each day. We'll explain how to set

up each app and set daily walking goals. The apps will automatically log your activity and provide a detailed summary of your data over a long period of time. We'll start with the Android app, so if you use an iPhone, go straight to Step 4.

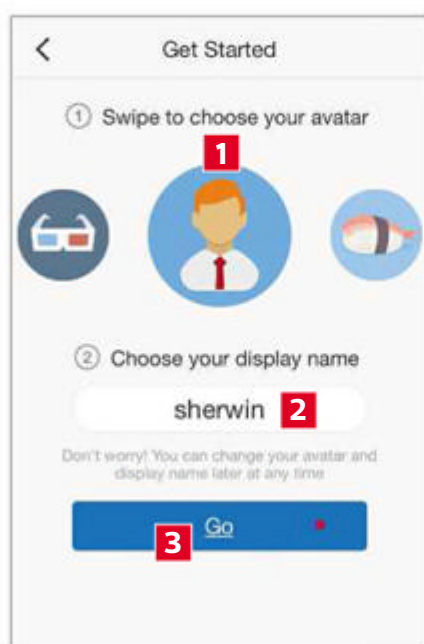


STEP 1 On your Android phone, install Google Fit from www.snipca.com/17003. Open the app, log in with your Google account, then tap I Agree. You first need to enter some basic details that the app will use to start tracking your activity. Tap the Gender dropdown menu and select yours **1**. Now tap below the Height field, select a unit of measurement from the dropdown menu (centimetres or feet & inches), then enter your height **2**. Repeat this process with the Weight field (options include kilograms, pounds or stones). Now tap Next **3** (twice), then I Agree.

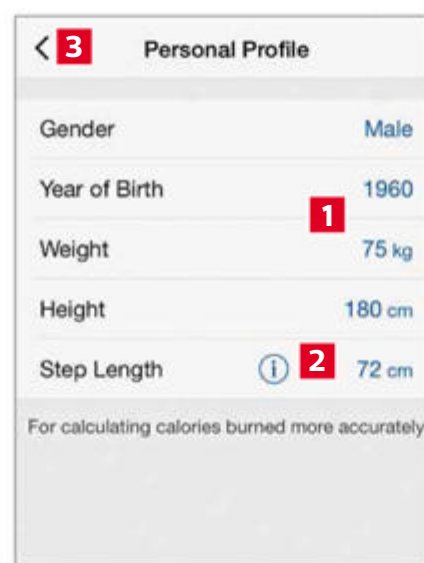
STEP 2 You'll now see a circle containing four dots **1**. Swipe right within the circle to see the number of minutes you've walked, distance covered, calories burned and steps taken (in that order). You can now set a goal for the number of steps you want to walk every day. When you reach your goal, you'll see a notification on your phone. To set this, tap the three dots **2**, Settings, then tap 'Set a goal' below 'Daily goal'.

STEP 3 We'll set a goal of 5,000 steps a day, so tap the Goal type dropdown menu and select Steps **1** (other options are 'Active time', 'Calories burned' and 'Distance'). Now type 5000 in the field below **2**, then tap Save **3**. The distance you walk is displayed in kilometres by default, but if you want to see it in miles, then scroll to the Unit section at the bottom, click the dropdown menu below Distance and select Miles. You can also access your Google Fit data online by going to fit.google.com and logging into your account. Now use your phone for a day or two, then go to Step 6.

STEP 4 Apple has its own free fitness app called Health (iPhone 5s and later only). But the best free app to track your activity on any iPhone is Pacer (www.snipca.com/17004). Install and open the app, swipe across the introductory screens, tap Get Started, Allow, then OK. You should first create a free ID, then enter your basic details to help the app track your activity better. To create an ID, tap the Me section at the bottom right, then tap Create PacerID at the top. Now select an avatar by swiping across **1**, type a display name **2** then tap Go **3**.



STEP 5 To enter your basic details, tap Personal Profile. Here you need to enter your gender, year you were born, weight, height and step length by tapping '+' beside the relevant field and entering the values **1**. You need to enter your weight in kgs and your height and step length in cms (use Google for unit conversion if you need to). To calculate your step length **2**, simply multiply your height by 0.4. Tap the Back icon **3** when you've finished. To set your daily steps goal, tap Settings at the top right, Step Goals, Custom Goal, type the number of steps (for example, 5000), then tap OK. Now use your phone for a day or two, then go to Step 7.



STEP 6 Open Google Fit, tap and hold the large circle then swipe down to refresh your app data. Scroll to the bottom to see how many steps you walked on the previous day. Tap the day **1** to see a detailed breakdown of how many steps you walked and at what time. 'Show graph details' **2** displays the same data but on a graph. As you use the app, you can switch from a 'Day view' (default) to a week or month view using the dropdown menu **3**. You can see how long you've walked, how many calories you've burned and what distance you covered by tapping the Steps dropdown menu **4** and selecting the measurement you want.



STEP 7 Open Pacer on your iPhone to see how many steps you've walked and what percentage of your goal you've completed for that day. At the top you'll also see the number of calories burned, the amount of time walked and the distance covered. Now tap Trends at the bottom left, then rotate your phone to the landscape mode to see each of these values as thumbnails on the right **1**. Tap any thumbnail (for example, Steps) to see more detailed information plotted on a graph **2**. At the top you'll see your daily average and the total number of steps you've walked **3**. As you use the app over a prolonged period, you can switch from a monthly to a six-month view or view all your data since you installed the app **4**. ●

Remove duplicate files for free

What you need: Duplicate & Same Files Searcher; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1

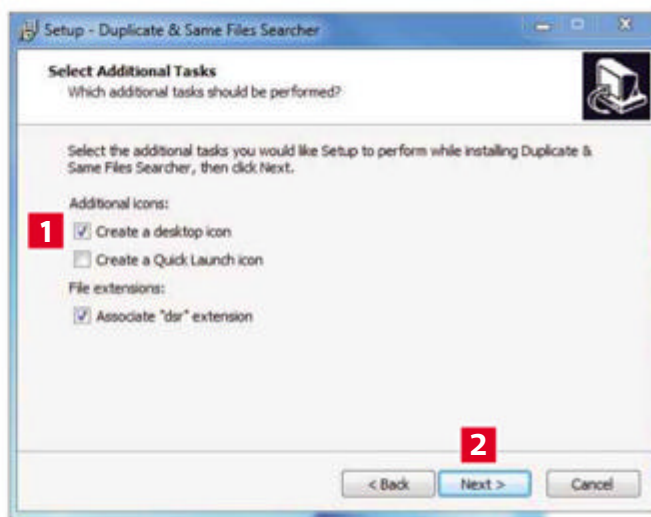
Time required: 30 minutes

Most free duplicate-file-removal programs are quite limited in scope. For example, they may only let you remove a certain number of files or perhaps only identify (but not remove) duplicates before demanding payment to go any further. Duplicate & Same Files Searcher is a

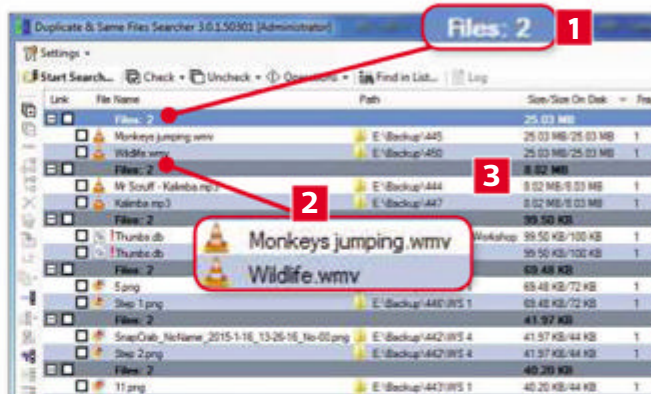
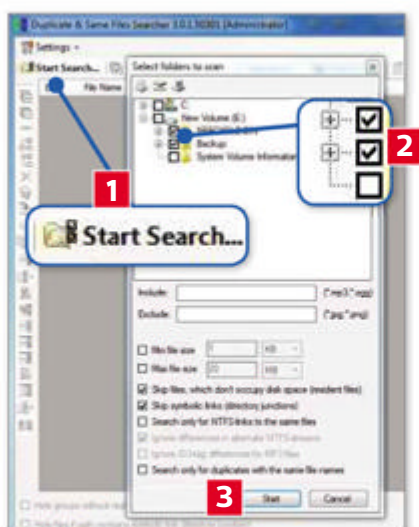
brilliant free program with no such limitations. Unlike some other programs, it identifies duplicate files even if they've been saved under different names. You can even search for files of a particular type and within specified size ranges, then delete or move them to a folder of your choice.



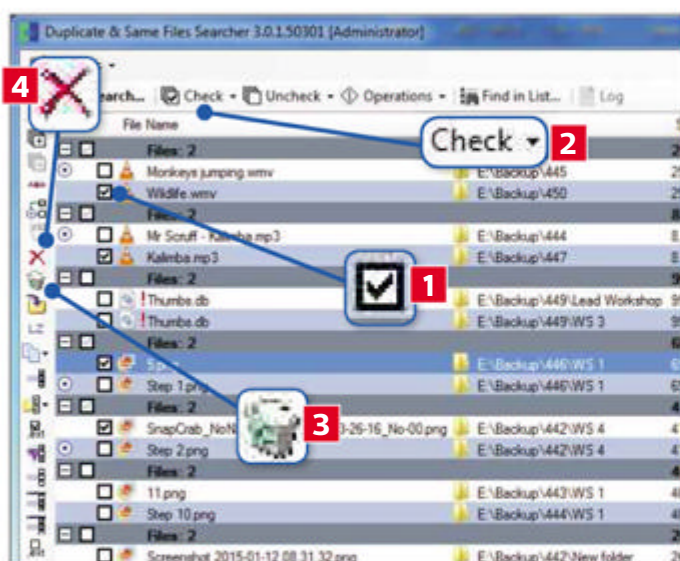
STEP 1 To download Duplicate & Same Files Searcher, go to www.snipca.com/16947, scroll to the bottom of the page, then click one of the Download links below the latest version of the program (3.0.1 at time of writing). Click the downloaded setup file, Run, Yes, OK, then click Next (three times). Now tick 'Create a desktop icon' **1**, click Next again **2**, then Install and Finish to launch the program. The program's default font size is set to Normal. If you want to increase the font size (to Middle or Large), click the Settings dropdown menu at the top left, move your cursor to Font Size and select the size you want.



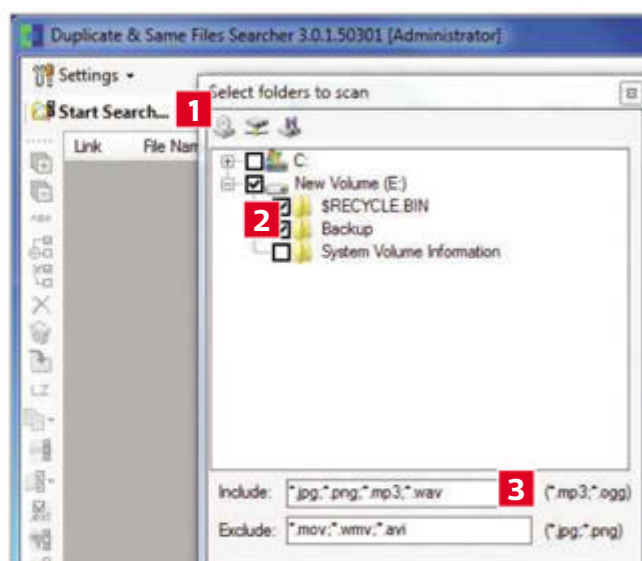
STEP 2 Next, click Start Search **1**. To search for all duplicate files on your PC, tick all the drive letters at the top. If you only want to search for duplicates within a specific location on your PC, then click the parent folders **2** and tick the relevant drives and/or folders. After you've done that, click Start **3** to begin scanning your selected location(s).



STEP 3 You'll now see a list of all your duplicate files, along with the number of duplicates found **1** for each. As you can see, a number of detected duplicates had been saved under different names **2**. You'll also see the location and size of these files **3**. To check whether the program has identified duplicate files correctly, double-click any file to open it in its default program.

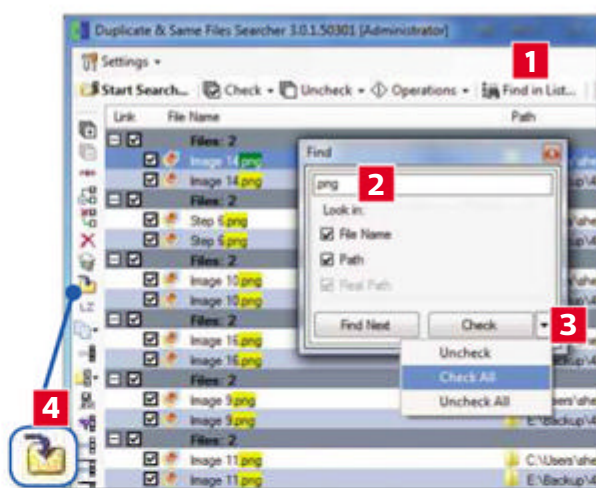
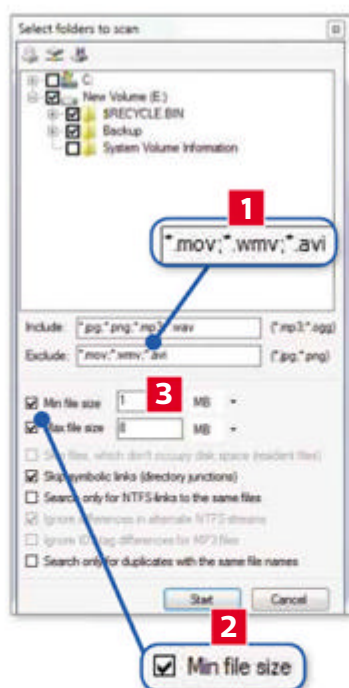


STEP 4 Tick any duplicates you want to delete **1**, but avoid deleting any files (especially system files) that you're unsure of. If the list is quite long, you can speed up your selection by deleting only the first or last of each duplicated pair/group. To do this, click the Check dropdown menu **2** and select Check First Files or Check Last Files. You can now move the selected files to your Recycle Bin (click the Bin icon **3**) or delete them from your PC permanently (click the X icon **4**). Click Yes to confirm.



STEP 5 We'll now show you how to narrow your duplicate search to certain file types and specific file-size ranges. First, click Start Search **1**, then tick the drives or folders **2** you want to search. To only search for specific file types, type ***** followed by the file type (for example, .jpg) in the Include field, separating each file type with a **;**. For example, if you want to scan common photo and music file formats, you should type ***.jpg;*.png;*.mp3;*.wav** **3**.

STEP 6 You can also exclude certain files from your search by typing them in the Exclude field (using the format described in Step 5). For example, to exclude common video formats, type ***.mov;*.wmv;*.avi** **1**. You can also specify file sizes in your search. For example, to search for duplicate photo and music files between 1MB and 8MB, tick 'Min file size' **2**, set the dropdown menu (from KB) to MB and type **1** in the adjacent field **3**. Next, tick 'Max file size', then type **8** in the field. Now click Start to begin searching for files that meet these criteria.



STEP 7 Once the program has generated your list of duplicates, you can refine your search even further. Click 'Find in List' **1**, then type the name of the file you want to find or its file type (such as .png) **2**. Relevant files will be highlighted in yellow in the list. To select all highlighted files in one go, click the Check dropdown menu **3**, then Check All. You can then delete these files by clicking the Bin or X icons (see Step 4). If you want to move the selected files to a folder instead, click the folder icon **4**, then the three dots at the top right, navigate to the folder, change the file name at the bottom, click Save, then OK. ●

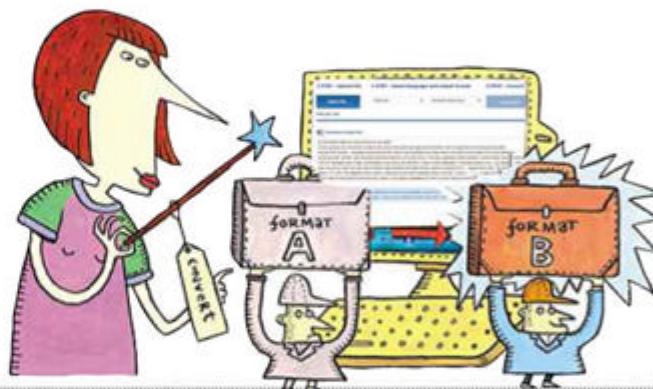
Convert scanned files into docs to edit

What you need: PC, scanner **Time required:** 10 minutes

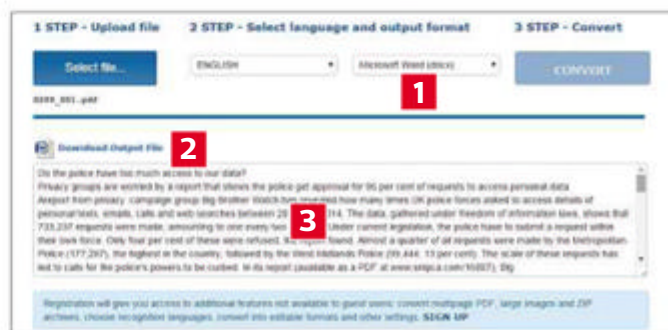
OCR (optical character recognition) technology converts scanned paper documents, such as letters and bills, into text you can edit on your computer.

The Online OCR website offers this service for free,

converting your scans into Word documents that you can then make changes to. The site can also be used to convert PDFs or photos containing text into Word documents, and even lets you convert multiple files in one go.



STEP 1 To convert a single scanned page into a Word document, go to www.onlineocr.net, click the 'Select file' button, navigate to the scanned file on your PC, then click Open. Next, enter the six-digit code you see into the 'Enter Captcha code' field at the bottom right. Now select the format for your converted file (options include Microsoft Word **1**, Excel and plain text), then click the Convert button. After that's done, click the Download Output File link **2** to save the Word document to your PC. Alternatively, copy and paste the text from the field **3** into a Word document (or an email). You are limited to converting 15 files per hour, but this should be more than enough.



ONLINE OCR

Create a New Account

Enter username: sherwin **1**

Enter password: *****

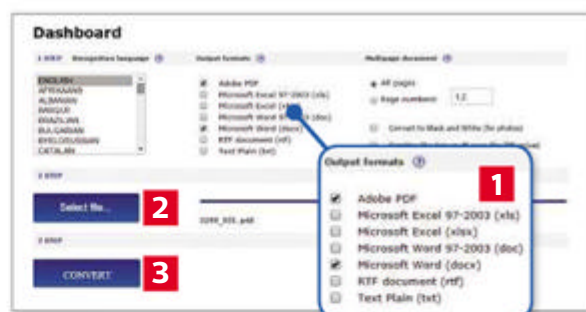
Confirm password: *****

Enter E-Mail: **2**

Captcha code: 100238

Sign Up **3**

STEP 2 If you want to convert multiple documents in one go, you need to sign up for an Online OCR account, which lets you batch-convert up to 25 pages for free. Signing up also lets you create Word documents from scans (such as photos) that have text somewhere in them, among other advanced features. To create an account, click the green SIGN UP link at the top right. Now type a username **1**, enter and confirm a password, then type your email address and the captcha code **2**, then click Sign Up **3**. Next, click the 'Go to Login page' link and log into your account.



STEP 3 You'll now see a list of output formats. You can select multiple formats by ticking them **1**. Now click 'Select file' **2**, navigate to the file or files you want to convert, click Open, then Convert **3**. Next, click the Word/PDF file link to download it to your PC. Click Documents at the top right to access all your converted files (these are saved in your account for a month, after which they'll be deleted). If you want to convert more than 25 pages, simply create another free account (see Step 2). Alternatively, log out and use the free 'one page at a time' method (see Step 1). To pay for additional batch conversions, click the Buy Pages link at the top right.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
22 July

- Make super-smooth time-lapse videos
- Automatically create System Restore points
- Create a digital scrapbook of your life
- Make Skype calls in your browser

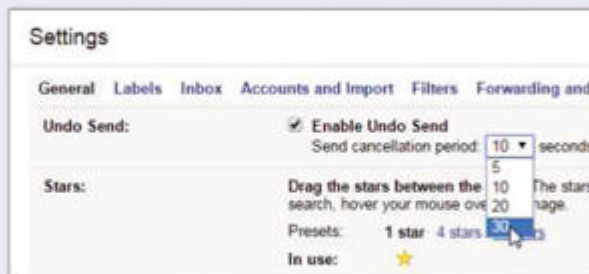
Subscribe to Computeractive at getcomputeractive.co.uk

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Activate Gmail's new 'Undo Send' option

There have been so many times when I've sent an email only to realise immediately that I've forgotten to include something important or sent it to the wrong person. I recently read that Gmail has introduced a new feature called 'Undo Send', which lets you retrieve an email a few seconds after you've dispatched it.

My friend told me this feature has been part of Gmail for years. Previously, it had been an element in Google Labs. The Gmail section of Google Labs lets users test prototype email features and provide feedback. The new 'Undo Send' feature is now out



of this experimental phase. But it's not enabled by default and has to be activated within Gmail's settings.

To do that, click the gear (cog) icon at the top right, then Settings. Now scroll down to see the new Undo Send option. Tick Enable Undo Send (see screenshot).

You now need to set 'a cancellation period' (the time you have to retrieve your email after it's sent). The options are 5, 10, 20 or 30 seconds. Select what you want, scroll to the bottom, then click Save Changes.

Now try sending an email. Whereas previously, you only saw a 'View message' link, you'll now also see an Undo link, which will remain on your screen for the 'cancellation period'. Clicking the link will retrieve your email. You can then make the necessary changes and re-send it.

Barry Lockhall



The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

FILE SHARING

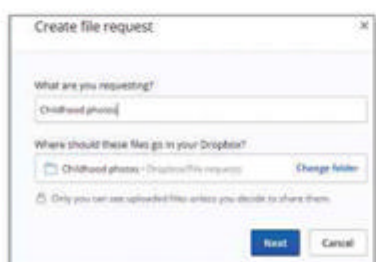
Receive Dropbox files from people without an account

My mother is 87 years old. She has an email address, but can't be bothered with the latest cloud technology or social media. I wanted some scanned photos that she has of me as a child, but there was no way she could send them via email because of the huge file size.

I use Dropbox and the other day they sent me an email telling me about a new feature that lets other people upload files to your account even if they don't have their own Dropbox account.

Go to www.dropbox.com and log into your account. Now click the new 'File requests' option at the bottom left, then click the 'Create file request' button. You'll see two fields: 'What are you requesting?' and 'Where should these files go in your Dropbox?'. Type a description of your folder (for example, 'Childhood photos') in the first. This will be the name of the destination folder shown in the second field (see screenshot right), then click Next. Type the recipient's email address and click Send.

The recipient will see a simple 'Upload files' button in their email. After clicking this, they then need



to click 'Choose files' and upload as many files as they want (up to a maximum of 2GB). You'll receive a notification via email when the files have been synced to your account. My mother found the steps really easy to follow and I received my childhood photos within an hour.

Dan Maynard

VIDEO STREAMING

Use Bing's new video-search tool

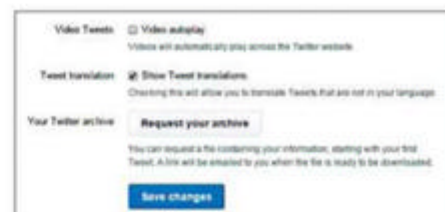
I use Bing for online searches and have been very impressed with its new video-search tool. Basically, Bing has managed to make the whole YouTube experience even better with an attractive interface and more relevant search features, especially for music videos.

Go to www.bing.com, click the Videos section at the top left, then search for any artist (The Rolling Stones, for example). You'll see a new page with a section at the top featuring their best-known songs. Click the right-pointing arrow to see album thumbnails that you can click and play songs from. You can filter your search by various parameters (including Length, Date and Resolution) using dropdown menus.

You can also search for music genres. For example, searching for 'soul music' brings up categories including

R&B, Jazz, 1970s Soul Music, Old School Soul Music and Marvin Gaye.

Emile Walker



SOCIAL MEDIA

Stop videos automatically playing on Twitter

My son recently taught me how to use Twitter. I like to keep up with all the latest news, sports, TV reviews and opinions, and Twitter lets me do all this from one handy place.

However, recently I've noticed that videos uploaded by people that I'm following start playing automatically on my timeline when I scroll to them. According to my son, this is a default setting that's come with the latest Twitter update, but thankfully you can turn it off.

Click your profile display icon at the top right, then Settings at the bottom. Now scroll to the bottom, untick 'Videos autoplay' in the Video Tweets section, then click the 'Save changes' button (see screenshot above). You'll need to enter your password to confirm your identity.

Carol Lewis

Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

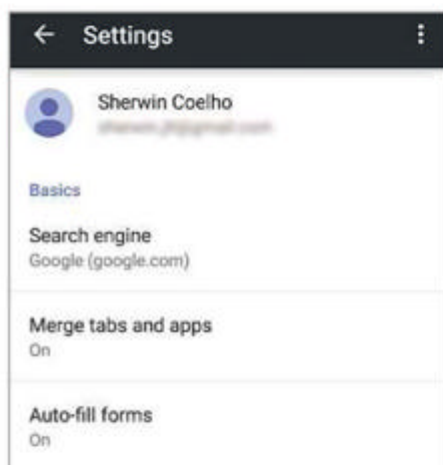
ANDROID

Access multiple Chrome tabs without leaving your browser



If you've updated your device to the latest version of Android (5.0, called Lollipop) and open multiple tabs in Chrome, you won't be able to access tabs you opened previously. To access these tabs, you'll need to tap the square button at the bottom right of your screen (called the Overview button).

To open a new Chrome tab, tap the three dots at the top right, then 'New tab' and go to the website of your choice. In order to switch between open Chrome tabs you first need to tap the Overview button. You'll now see all the apps that are open on your device as a carousel (each Chrome tab appears as a separate slide in this view). Swipe through and tap the tab you want to open.



If you'd rather see all your open tabs within the same browser, then there's a default setting you need to tweak. To do this, open Chrome, tap the three dots at the top right, scroll down and tap Settings. Next, tap 'Merge tabs and apps' (see screenshot below left), tap the slider to turn it off, then OK.

Now open Chrome and you'll see a tab number to the right of your URL bar at the top. Tap it to see your other open tabs within the app, then tap the one you want to navigate to.

ANDROID & IOS

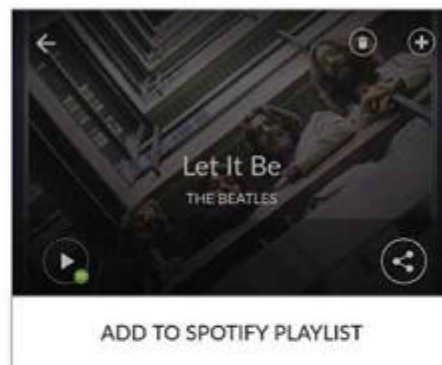
Add tracks you hear to your Spotify playlists



Shazam, the free app that identifies songs playing around you, has now been updated with Spotify integration. This means you can now identify songs you hear (on the radio or TV, for example), then instantly add them to one of your Spotify playlists.

First, install Shazam (Android: www.snipca.com/17040; iOS: www.snipca.com/17041) and – if you haven't already – Spotify (Android: www.snipca.com/17042; iOS: www.snipca.com/17043). Register free for both apps (if this is the first time you're using them).

To identify a song you hear, simply open Shazam, then tap the big S symbol within the circle at the top and hold your device close to the source of the song. Once the app identifies your song, tap the



'+' symbol at the top right, then tap 'Add to Spotify Playlist' at the bottom (see screenshot above). The first time you do this, you'll need to tap Connect, 'Log in to Spotify', log into your account, then tap Okay.

You'll now see all your Spotify playlists within Shazam. Simply tap the playlist you want to add your song to.

IOS

Install free apps without typing your password



Until recently you had to type your password every time you wanted to install an app from the App Store – regardless of whether the app was free or paid-for. However, in the latest iOS version (8.3, at the time of writing), you can choose to install free apps without having to type your password.

First, to update your device to the latest version of iOS, open Settings, tap General, then Software Update. If there's a

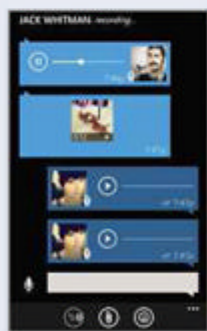
Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

WhatsApp Messenger Free

Android, iOS, Windows Phone:
www.snipca.com/17045

In Issue 448 (page 42), we showed you how to make free phone calls using

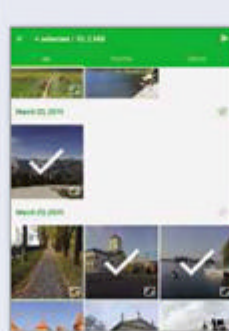


WhatsApp Messenger on Android phones. The feature is now available on iOS devices and Windows Phones. Also new to Windows Phones is the ability to send voice messages from the app.

BitTorrent Shoot Free

Android, iOS, Windows Phone:
www.snipca.com/17049

BitTorrent Shoot is the fastest way to send a number of photos or large video files from one device to another on the same Wi-Fi

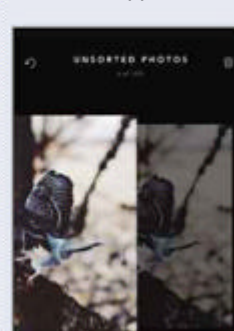


network. Unlike cloud services no remote servers are involved. Tap the files you want to send, then tap Send. The recipient needs to scan the QR code on your device to instantly receive them.

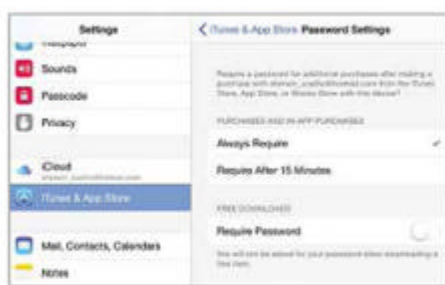
Slidebox Free

iOS: www.snipca.com/17052

This iPhone app lets you organise your photos into albums and delete duplicates using swipe gestures. Any albums you create will appear as thumbnails at the



bottom. Simply drag a photo to an album to add it there. It also lets you compare similar images and delete unwanted duplicates by swiping upwards.



pending update, simply follow the onscreen instructions.

To install free apps without the need for a password, open Settings, tap 'iTunes & App Store', then Password Settings. Now tap the slider next to Require Password in the Free Downloads section (see screenshot above) to disable it.

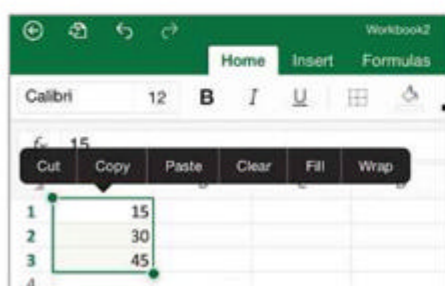
iOS

Use Excel's new 'autofill' feature



The PC version of Microsoft Excel has always had the handy 'autofill' feature. Basically, this means if you enter recognisably sequential values (for example, 1, 2, 3, 4; or 5, 10, 15, 20; or Jan, Feb, March, April) in successive cells down a column, then select these cells, click the dot at the bottom of the last one and drag it down, Excel will automatically determine and fill in the remaining values as far as the cell you've dragged to.

This feature is now available on the iOS version, but the method varies because of the touchscreen nature of the device. Install Excel (www.snipca.com/17044) and open a new worksheet. Now type a recognisable sequence of values in cells down a column (we've entered multiples of 15 in our screenshot below). Next, tap the top cell, then click the green tick icon at the top right. A box will appear around the cell. Drag the dot at the bottom of the box to the last numbered cell, then tap Fill (see screenshot). You'll now see a small arrow at the bottom of the last numbered cell. Drag this down as far as you want and the corresponding values (in our case, further multiples of 15) will automatically appear in the cells.



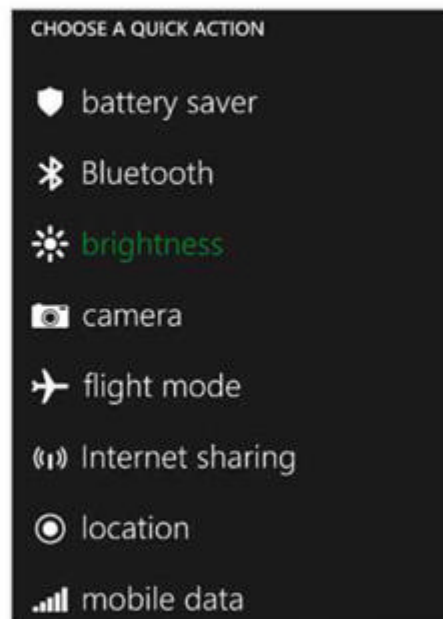
WINDOWS PHONE

Choose which tiles appear in your notification panel



Windows Phones have four square notification tiles in the notification panel. By default, these are Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Flight Mode and Camera. However, if you don't use any one of these regularly, then it's easy to replace it with something more useful (such as 'battery saver' or 'brightness').

To do this, swipe down from the top of your screen to access your notification panel, then tap All Settings at the top right. Scroll down to the 'personalisation' section and tap 'notifications+actions'. At the top, you'll see your four default notification tiles. Tap the one you want to replace. You'll now see a list of functions (see screenshot right) to replace that tile with – tap the one you want.



Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Look and Find

£1.49 www.snipca.com/17053 (iOS)

This game will help your toddler identify objects. They play *Sesame Street*'s Elmo and need to find the five objects on the left by zooming into the messy room and tapping them, after which they'll see a small animation of the object. They win Elmo stickers after completing each level.

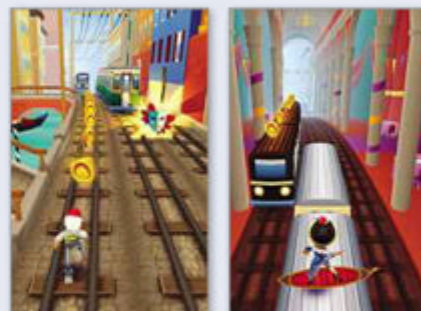


AGES 6-10

Subway Surfers

Free www.snipca.com/17056 (Android, iOS, Windows Phone)

In this game, your child needs to avoid getting collared by the policeman while surfing on subway trains. While on the run, they need to collect as many coins as they can and avoid incoming obstacles. They can double-tap the screen to activate the hover board and trade coins to upgrade it.



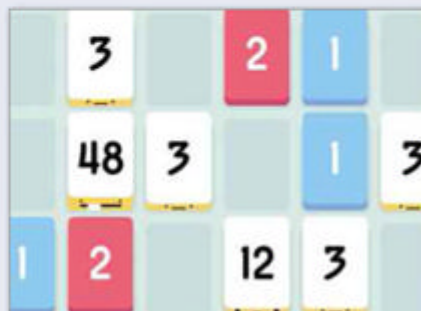
AGES 11-16

Threes!

Free www.snipca.com/17057 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/17058 (iOS)

In this award-winning game, you start with a grid containing 1s and 2s. Swiping the grid in any direction adds together adjacent numbers (always multiples of 3). The aim is to produce the highest total you can. It's not as easy as it looks.



Make Windows Better

Clever tips for every version

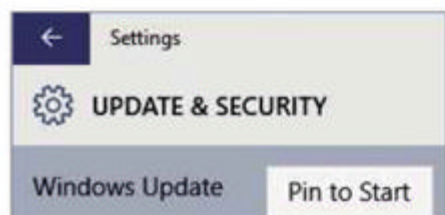
WINDOWS 10

Add commonly used settings to the Start menu



The Start menu in Windows 10 is much more dynamic than its former incarnation in Windows 7. There are tiles on the right, while the section on the left is similar to Windows 7 and provides access to the programs you use most often. The 'All apps' option at the bottom lets you see all the apps and programs on your PC.

In our Workshop on page 35 we show you how to add website tiles to the Windows 10 Start menu, but you can also add tiles for settings you use on a regular basis – for example, to update to the latest Windows 10 Preview Build so you can make use of the latest features. Instead of navigating through various menus to access the Windows Update option, you can simply add this to your Start menu to open it with a few clicks.



To do this, click the Start button, Settings, 'Update & security', now right-click Windows Update at the top left (though this applies to any program setting), then click 'Pin to Start'. Now open the Start menu by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard and you'll see the Windows Update tile at the bottom of the right-hand section. Click and drag the tile to reposition it where you want. To resize it, right-click it, move your cursor to Resize, then click Small, Medium or Wide.

WINDOWS 7, 8.1, 10

Batch-rotate photos quickly



When saving photos from a digital camera or mobile device, one common problem is some photos being saved in the wrong orientation. The easiest way to batch-rotate a lot of photos is – keeping the Shift key pressed – click to select the photos you want to rotate in a particular direction (clockwise, for example). Now right-click any of the selected photos and click 'Rotate clockwise' (or 'Rotate counterclockwise').

WINDOWS 8.1, 10

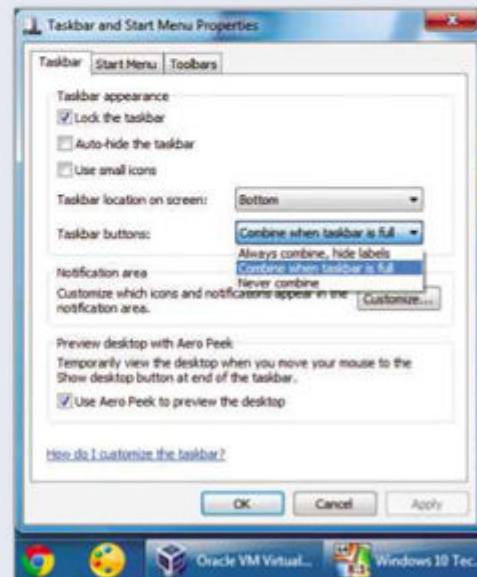
View Taskbar items the way you want



There are three ways to view items (programs and folders) on your Taskbar – both pinned and open items. Right-click any blank space on your Taskbar, then click Properties. Now click the 'Taskbar buttons' dropdown menu to see three options (we explain each below). Select the one you want, click Apply and OK.

The first option 'Always combine, hide labels' will display icons only (without the item name). If you have two or more similar items open (two folders or Word documents, for example), then these will be displayed as stacked icons. Move your cursor over this stack to see thumbnail previews of both items, then click the one you want to open.

The second option 'Combine when taskbar is full' displays open items as buttons, which display the names of those items, making them easier to identify. However, pinned items that aren't open still appear as icons (see bottom-left corner of



screenshot). If there are many items on the Taskbar, similar ones will be displayed as stacked icons.

With the last option 'Never combine', whenever there are too many Taskbar items open, you'll see an arrow on the far right. Click this to access the items that aren't displayed and select the one you want to open.

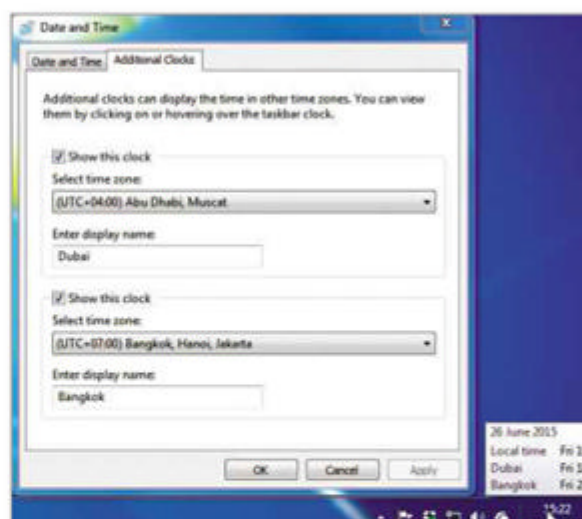
WINDOWS 7, 8.1

Keep track of time in multiple cities



You may have family or friends living abroad and need to know at a moment's notice whether it's convenient to call them. Happily, it's easy to keep track of time in any two cities in the world in Windows 7 or 8.1.


To do that, click the time and date option at the bottom right of your screen, the 'Change date and time settings' link, then click the Additional Clocks tab and tick 'Show this clock'. Select the city's time zone from the dropdown menu below and type a name for that clock. To add another one, tick 'Show this clock' on the section below and repeat the process. Now click Apply, then OK.



To see the times in these places, simply move your cursor to the time and date option at the bottom right of your PC (see screenshot above). Click the time and date if you want to see three clocks displaying the time in the cities you selected.

OFFICE

Use the new Insights feature in Office 2016

 In Issue 450, we showed you how to install and use the new Office 2016 Preview (see 'Try Office 2016 on your PC for free' Workshop on page 35). The Preview received its first update a few weeks ago, which includes a new tool called Insights that lets you access further information about any text you select. For example, you can find definitions for words or information about a place or a famous person simply by right-clicking the relevant text.

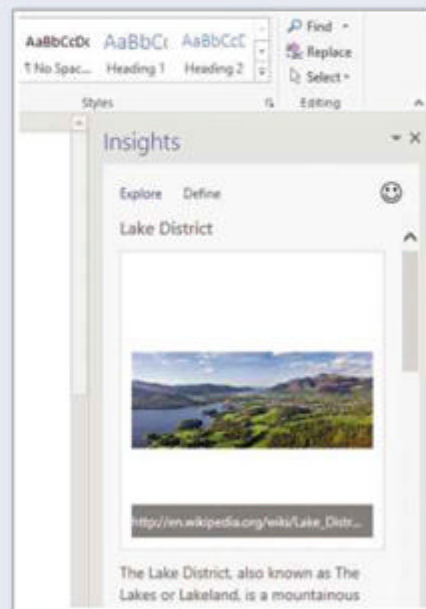
First, to apply the update, open any Office 2016 Preview program, and you'll see a Microsoft Activation Wizard. Click Next (twice) then Upgrade. Once that's done, restart the program.

To use Insights (which works in all Office programs), highlight a section

of text (a name or location – for example, Lake District – see screenshot), right-click it, then click the new Smart Lookup option. A new Insights panel will now slide in from the right. Click the 'Got it' button to agree to the terms and conditions (you only need to do this the first time you use it). The Insights panel contains two tabs – Explore and Define.


The Explore tab contains a list of relevant entries from Wikipedia and Bing as small snippets. To access that information in full within the Insights panel, click the link at the bottom of the snippet.

The Define tab is useful for finding definitions for words. It also has a speaker icon you can click to hear the exact pronunciation of that word.



SWAY

Insert 'interactive' charts in your sway

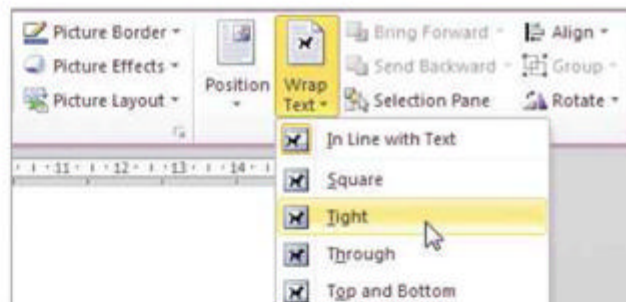
 Microsoft has added 'interactive' charts to its new online presentation tool Sway. Unlike in Excel, you can show/hide particular bars in a graph simply by clicking the relevant bar header above it.

Go to www.sway.com, click 'Sign in' and log in with your Microsoft (Hotmail or Outlook) account. Now click My Sway at the top right. Click to select the presentation (or sway) you want to add an interactive chart to, or click 'Create New' to create a new one. To add a chart, click the new 'Chart (Preview)' option at the bottom of the left column.

Now click the 'click here' link within

the chart section in your sway. Next, click 'Welcome to Interactive Charts' and you'll see a dummy graph containing two bars – 'sales' (blue) and 'profits' (orange).


To create your own graph, click the data icon (middle icon at the top right). You'll see a table of cells. Double-click any cell to type. Add your bar headers in the top row and their values in the columns below. Next, click the small green arrow at the top left to see the values on an interactive chart (see screenshot below left).



top right, then select Tight (see screenshot above). You'll now be able click and drag the image to wherever you want in your document.

OFFICE


Add actions you use often to the Quick Access Toolbar

 All Office programs have a small set of icons at the top left (above the Ribbon) known as the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT). By default, this contains a floppy-disc icon (Save) and a blue arrow icon (Undo).

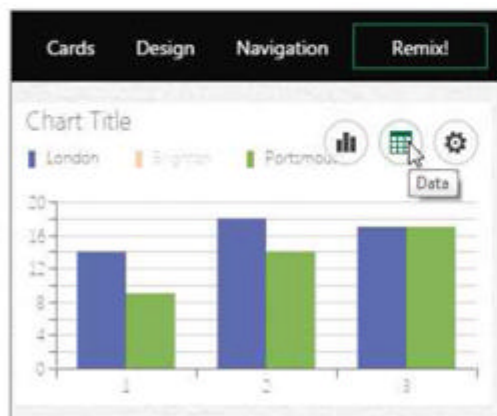
To add more actions to the QAT, click the dropdown menu on the right and select an action. You'll see useful options including Email, Print and Open Recent Files. You can also move the QAT from its default position at the top to just below the Ribbon by clicking the dropdown menu on the right, then clicking 'Show Below the Ribbon'.

WORD

Reposition images in your document more easily

 It's easy to insert an image into a document, but difficult to position it precisely where you want. However, there's a simple trick that lets you drag and drop an image anywhere within a document.

To add an image, click the Insert tab, Picture, navigate to the image you want, then click Insert. Now click the image, the Format tab, the Wrap Text dropdown menu at the



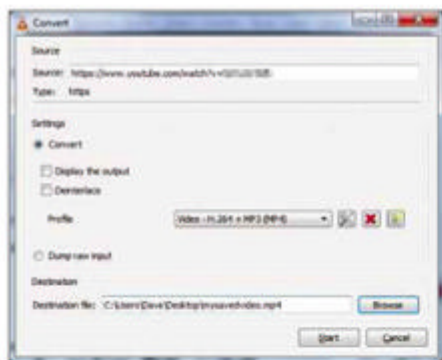


VLC

Improve video quality, record your Windows Desktop and use a smartphone or tablet as a remote control

Play or save online videos

VLC lets you download videos hosted by sites like YouTube. Simply copy the video's web address, then go to VLC and choose 'Convert/Save' from the Media menu. Select the Network tab, click in the 'Please enter a network URL' field and press Ctrl+V to paste the video's address. Click the down arrow on the button at the bottom and select 'Convert/Save', then click the button again. Click Convert and choose the desired video-file format from the Profile dropdown menu. Click Browse, select a destination, type a name for the saved video and click Start, and then wait for the video to download.



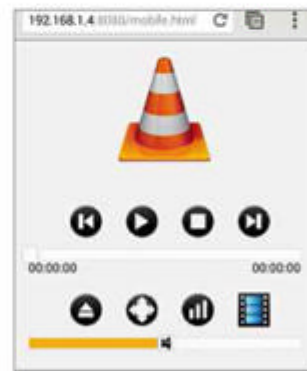
VLC has a built-in tool for saving online videos from websites like YouTube

Use your phone and tablet as remote controls

You can control VLC's playback using your smartphone or tablet and the device's browser. First, you need to tweak a few settings in VLC on your PC. Click Tools, then Preferences, and then select the All button. Click 'Main interfaces' and tick Web, then expand 'Main interfaces' by double-clicking it, then click Lua. Type a password of your choice in the Password box, click Save and restart VLC.

If a firewall warning appears, grant permission. Type **cmd** into Start and press Enter. In the Command Prompt window that appears, type **ipconfig** and press Enter. Make a note of the IPv4 address (it'll be something like '192.168.1.4') then close the Command Prompt window.

Finally, go to the browser on your phone or tablet and type the IPv4 address, adding **:8080** to the end (so you type **192.168.1.4:8080**, for example). When



Turn your phone or tablet into a VLC remote control

prompted to enter a username and password, leave the username field blank and type your password. Now you should be in remote control of VLC.

Screen-record your Desktop

VLC includes a tool for capturing whatever happens on your screen. This means you can record streaming video or make PC tutorials for friends.

Click Media followed by Convert/Save, then select the Capture Device tab. Leave 'Capture mode' and the Device Selections as they are. Next, click the Convert/Save button, choose the video type from the Profile dropdown menu, click Browse, choose a location, type the file name and then click Save. Now click Start to begin recording. To stop the recording, return to VLC and click the red cross to close it.

Use the keyboard to control playback

There are loads of handy keyboard shortcuts in VLC. For example, hitting the plus (+) or minus (-) keys speeds up or slows down playback. The left and right square brackets ([and]) do the same thing but in smaller increments (one-tenth). Press F for full screen, M to mute the audio, Ctrl+arrows (up or down) to change the volume, and the space bar to switch between pause and play. There's a full list of shortcuts on the VLC [wiki site](http://www.videolan.org) (www.snipca.com/16682).

Improve video quality

VLC can work magic by smoothing out rough edges when you're watching low-resolution videos. Play your video, then go to the Tools menu and click 'Post processing', then choose a level from 1 (least processing) to 6 (most). Depending on the power of your PC, more processing may result in jerkier video playback, so experiment with different levels to find the best balance.

Customise VLC using skins and extensions

VLC supports dozens of browser-style free extensions (VLC calls them 'addons') that add new functions to the program, as well as 'skins' that change how the player looks.

Explore extensions on the Addons section of VLC's website (<http://addons.videolan.org>). Popular choices include VLSub (www.snipca.com/16941), which makes it easy to add subtitles to your downloaded videos. You need to download subtitles separately using



sites such as OpenSubtitles (www.opensubtitles.org).

You can also browse and download skins from VLC's website (www.snipca.com/16630). You might find the WMP11 or WMP12

skins (see screenshot), which are useful if you often switch between VLC and Windows Media Player (WMP), because they make VLC look and work just like Microsoft's player – but with VLC's superior built-in tools.



Plug computers

The latest mini computers make your tower PC look like the Empire State Building

What are they?

Mini PCs entirely contained within a case the size of a power adapter. They plug into and are powered by an electrical socket. They've been around since 2009, but mostly only for Ubuntu, the Linux **distribution** that requires less **processor** power than Windows, and is therefore better suited to such a small machine. They've only had niche appeal so far, but that may soon change.

Why's that?

Because the first plug computer running Windows 10 has arrived. Made by Taiwanese company Quanta, the Compute Plug (see main image) has an **HDMI** port and two USB sockets. Like other mini PCs, such as the Raspberry Pi, it connects to a TV, keyboard and other peripherals to operate as a full system. But the most significant feature is that it works with Cortana, Microsoft's voice-controlled assistant. Using a headset, you'll be able to control the PC by speaking to it. Quanta has previously released plug computers that run Windows 8.1.

Aren't there even smaller computers available?

Yes, so-called 'PCs on a stick', the best-known being Intel's Compute Stick, which is no bigger than a pack of chewing gum (£129.98 from Amazon www.snipca.com/16840; see 'What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 442). It runs Windows 8.1, contains 32GB of internal storage and can read **microSD cards**. When plugged into an HDMI port it turns a TV into a computer.

Why would I want a 'stick' PC or plug computer?

Certainly not to use as your main PC – they lack the processing power and storage space you need for many intensive computer tasks. Companies that make mini PCs don't boast about their power, because that's not their main appeal. Instead, they market them as clever,



compact ways to turn your TV or spare monitor into a computer for simple web browsing or streaming music and videos. Microsoft likes the idea of mini PCs, calling them "really innovative devices" in a recent blog post (www.snipca.com/16850).

Why is Microsoft interested in them?

Because it wants to make sure that, as PCs get ever smaller, Windows 10 will be able to run on all of them. It wants the new operating system (out on 29 July) to be **flexible** enough to work on any PC of any shape and size. To that end, Microsoft

has teamed up with another Taiwanese firm, Foxconn, on the Kangaroo (see photo below). Resembling an external hard drive, the Kangaroo is a Windows 10 mini PC with a built-in fingerprint reader that works with Microsoft's new Windows Hello **biometric** software. It has a six-hour battery and can turn a TV into a Windows 10 PC.

How much do these new mini computers cost?

We don't yet know, nor whether they will be even launched in the UK. But we think it's likely because the overwhelming success of the Raspberry Pi in the UK has shown that we like our PCs small. The technology involved in shrinking PCs is very clever, but we should warn you that it has led to yet another crime against the English language.

Oh no. What is it?

The grotesque word 'plugputer', which has been used online by people who should know better. It's the ugliest new word we've come across since 'phablet'. Hopefully this will be the only time we'll ever need to use it.



Foxconn's Kangaroo mini PC runs Windows 10 and has a fingerprint reader built in

BEST FREE APPS EVER!

There are millions of free apps for your phone and tablet, but which ones are any good? Jane Hoskyn reveals our all-time Top 40

How many free apps have you downloaded since you bought your first tablet? Unless that was last week, you've probably installed dozens or even hundreds of these little nuggets of

mobile software – and we're happy to bet you're ignoring most of them.

We're just the same. We love browsing for new, old and interesting apps on Google's Play Store and Apple's App Store, and we're easily sucked into the sites' breadcrumb trails ('customers also bought', 'more apps by this developer' and so on). This simple pleasure has kept us up far too late at night and left our phones and tablets stuffed to the gills.

The only apps you need

There's been an app breeding frenzy in the eight years since Apple launched its first iPhone. For one brief moment last year, the Play Store (Android) and App Store (iOS) stocked the same number of apps: around 1.4 million each. Then the

Play Store overtook the App Store and kept going. Now they're touting over 3 million apps between them, with 300,000 on offer for Windows Phone.

Full disclosure: we didn't try 3 million apps when researching this feature, but we tried enough to make us barely want to look at a touchscreen in the face again. The result is a Top 40 you can trust.

These are the apps we actually want to use again and again – and they're not all famous names. Instagram and Facebook didn't even make the final cut. There are better photo editors than Instagram, and Facebook's app is just a less-good version of its website. The apps in this list are innovative, useful and give us renewed respect for our phones and tablets. Let the countdown begin.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Discover the best free apps for Android, iPhone, iPad and Windows Phone
- Switch to a faster, safer mobile browser
- Never pay for texts or calls again
- Turn your photos into masterpieces
- Find out which app your phone and tablet (and PC!) can't live without

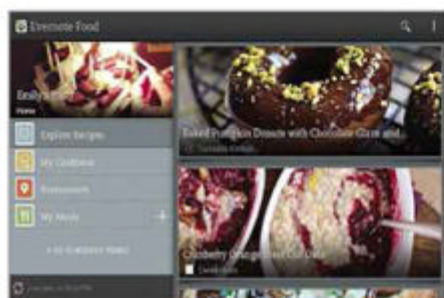
BEST FREE APPS EVER: 40 TO 31

40 INTERNET
DuckDuckGo**Android, iOS:** <https://duckduckgo.com/app>

Let's start with a revolutionary idea: a brilliant search tool that's not made by Google. DuckDuckGo makes privacy a priority, so it doesn't track your usage or store your IP address. You can also disable cookies and opt not to save your search history – which means fewer junk files as well as greater anonymity.

39 RECIPES
Evernote Food**Android:** www.snipca.com/16985**iOS:** www.snipca.com/16986

You've probably heard of Evernote (<https://evernote.com>), the virtual ring-binder you can fill with notes, to-do lists, photos, web clippings and more.



This spin-off app is your own digital cookbook, and you'll find it indispensable if you like your food – cooking it, growing it, eating it or even taking photos of it.

38 MEASUREMENTS
ConvertPad**Android:** www.snipca.com/17017

If Evernote is the apex of slick design, this unit-converter is the opposite – but my goodness it gets the job done. Convert quickly and accurately between hundreds of measurements including inches and centimetres, UK and US shoe sizes, pounds sterling and 160 world currencies – and many more. Android only, despite the 'Pad' in the name.

37 SIMULATOR
Train Driver 15**Android:** www.snipca.com/17015**iOS:** www.snipca.com/17016

There are plenty of free online simulators that let you live out your childhood fantasies from the comfort of your home (see Issue 443), but they're too resource-hungry for the browser on your phone and tablet. Train Driver 15 is the best of a bunch of sim games designed to fit

smaller screens and processors, and its graphics are wonderful, though we could have done without the big banner advert.

36 MUSIC
Shazam**Android, iOS:** www.shazam.com/apps

We used to dismiss this fashionable music app as kids' stuff, until we found ourselves using it regularly to 'name that tune' being played on the radio, in a shop or over a film's end credits. See page 44 for a handy playlist tip.

35 ASTRONOMY
SkEye**Android:** www.snipca.com/17011

Explore the sky far, far above your living room with this real-time planetarium. You can compare today's planetary positions with those of any date in the future or past, such as the day you were born. Currently Android only, SkEye is our favourite replacement for Google's Sky Map (www.snipca.com/17012), which hasn't been updated for four years.

34 SCANNER
Office Lens**Android:** www.snipca.com/17062**iOS:** www.snipca.com/17061**Windows Phone:** www.snipca.com/17088

Turn your phone into a scanner – then turn your messy paper documents into perfectly presented PDFs or photos.

Microsoft's app uses OCR (optical character recognition) so you can search for text in your saved scans, even scanned photos. See our Workshop in Issue 450.

33 DRIVING
Waze**Android, iOS, Windows Phone:**www.waze.com

Cross that fancy GPS device off your wish list and use this free app as your driving companion instead. Waze harnesses your built-in GPS and microphone, along with live maps and traffic reports, to talk you to your destination.

32 DOCUMENTS
DocuSign**Android, iOS, Windows Phone:**www.snipca.com/17089

Ever been asked: "Please sign the attached form and return by email"? That's no longer as ridiculous as it sounds, thanks to this easy-to-use app that lets you sign documents by writing on your touchscreen with your finger.



UNINSTALL MULTIPLE USELESS APPS

31 Easy Uninstaller**Android:** www.snipca.com/17008

Android apps are much easier to install than uninstall. To install them, you don't even have to switch on your phone or tablet – just go to the Play Store (<https://play.google.com/store>) and click Install. It only takes a minute to amass scores of the things.

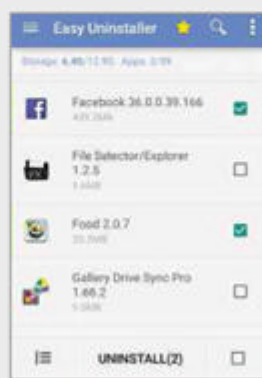
Removing them takes somewhat longer. Windows Phone makes it easier by letting you batch-remove multiple apps, and iOS automatically deletes leftover data when you remove an app; Android

does neither. Free Android app Easy Uninstaller, however, does both, and much more besides.

The app opens on a list of all your installed apps and lets you tick any you want to remove. You can order the list by size, date or name; compare apps'

battery and data usage; check your uninstall history, and even scan for malware.

Easy Uninstaller won't remove pre-installed apps; just the updates they've accumulated. To remove pre-installed apps you need to 'root' or 'jailbreak' your device, which is unsafe and voids your warranty.



BEST FREE APPS EVER: 30 TO 21

30 EMAIL Inbox

Android, iOS: www.google.co.uk/inbox

Google's new app aims to make your overloaded Gmail account more manageable by highlighting buried details and letting you 'snooze' emails that you don't want to read now, but don't want to forget about, either.

It's much needed. Gmail, like Facebook, was a hugely successful site that spawned an app because it had to. Both sites had too many elements to work properly on a little phone screen. Inbox, by contrast, is designed specially for smaller touchscreens. Given time to settle in, it could even turn checking your email into a pleasurable experience.

29 TIME-SAVING IFTTT

Android, iOS: <https://ifttt.com/products>

Put your apps and online tools to work using IFTTT ('if this, then that') connections called 'recipes'. It's almost impossible to explain without using awful phrases like "automate your digital life", so here are some examples for Android (www.snipca.com/17101, see screenshot below) and iOS (www.snipca.com).



[com/17100](http://www.snipca.com/17100)). Our current favourite is 'Set my Android's wallpaper to the Nasa Astronomy Picture of the Day' (www.snipca.com/17102).

28 DRIVING Potholer

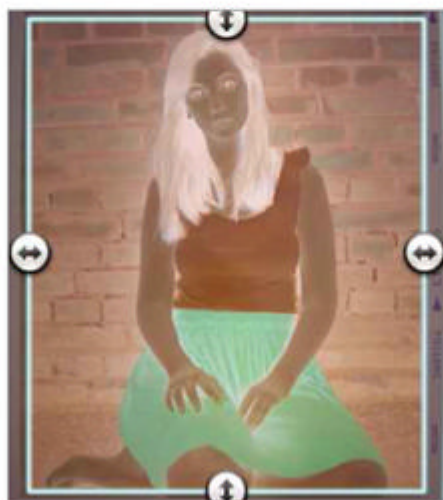
iOS: www.snipca.com/17099

Potholes, and hating them, are facts of British life. Now you can 'crowdsource' your way to smoother roads by using this app as you drive. It monitors your route, logs potholes and sends the data to the relevant authorities in your area.

27 SCANNER Helmut Film Scanner

Android: www.snipca.com/17097

Bring your treasured photo negatives back to life without spending all your spare cash on a negative scanner. All you need is an Android phone or tablet, a



light source (a bright window will do) and Helmut. Visit Helmut's Flickr page for tips and inspiration (www.snipca.com/17098).

26 PASSWORDS Dashlane

Android, iOS: www.snipca.com/17092

Choose a master password, import your browser logins into Dashlane's encrypted vault, and then you'll never have to type any usernames or passwords again – a blessed mercy if you struggle to type on tiny phone screens. This password isn't saved anywhere other than your brain, so make sure it's memorable (and unhackable).

25 PRIVACY Wickr

Android, iOS: www.wickr.com

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to send texts, documents, photos, audio files and even videos with top-level, end-to-end encryption and an expiry date. Once your message has expired, the evidence will be blitted to smithereens and no-one, including you, will ever be able to recover it.

24 VIDEO 5by

Android, iOS: www.5by.com

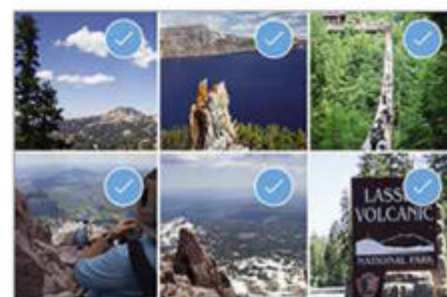
YouTube (Android, iOS: www.youtube.com/yt/devices) looks fantastic, but its

search function is weak and its recommendations are either ropey or repetitive. 5by is much better at guessing what you want to watch, even if it's never met you before. Simply tell it what mood you're in and even what day of the week it is, and it'll compile a playlist to match.

23 PHOTOS Carousel

Android, iOS: <https://carousel.dropbox.com>

Google's new Photos app is getting lots of attention for its 'unlimited' storage (we'll come to that shortly), but if you're a Dropbox user you may prefer Carousel. Installing it automatically gives you an



extra 3GB of space for free (just like the old Camera Upload bonus) and combines your Dropbox and device photos and videos in one seamless gallery.

22 MAPS & NAVIGATION Here

Android, iOS: <https://www.here.com/app>

Windows Phone: www.snipca.com/17096

Plan your journey by foot, car or public transport in more than 900 cities across 40 countries, then download your maps and plans to use fully offline, voice-navigation included. It's the ideal travel companion, with no **roaming** bills to spoil your trip – just make sure your phone or tablet has plenty of storage space.

21 MESSAGING WhatsApp

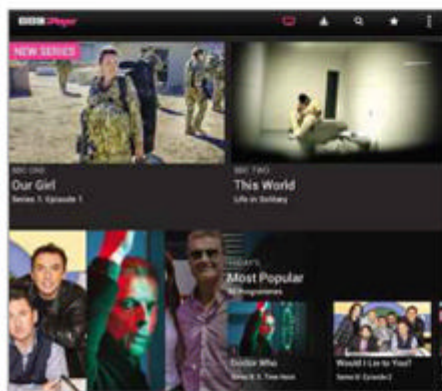
Android, iOS, Windows Phone: www.whatsapp.com

What's up with WhatsApp? Until a few months ago this instant-messaging app was an everyday essential (or every-half-hour essential for some of us), but recent updates have done more harm than good. Sort out your notifications and free calls, WhatsApp, and we may fall in love with you all over again.

BEST FREE APPS EVER: 20 TO 11

20 TV & RADIO
BBC iPlayerAndroid: www.snipca.com/17110iOS: www.snipca.com/17111Windows Phone: www.snipca.com/17112

Two cheers for the Beeb's catch-up app, which could and should be much further up our chart. Its content is outstanding, of course: live streams from all BBC channels and 30 days' worth of catch-up TV, and the Android version lets you download programmes to watch offline. You can even cast content to your TV if you've got a Chromecast. However, the iPlayer app suffers that Facebook/Gmail



problem of being a lesser, fiddly version of a brilliant online tool, and it's too cluttered for phone screens. We eagerly await a redesign à la BBC News – for which, stay tuned.

19 PLANNER
Any.doAndroid, iOS: www.any.do

Make to-do lists, plan projects, set personal goals and, if you've got any time left after all that, tick them off in this beautifully designed app that is to planning apps what the QE2 is to boats.

18 KEYBOARD
SwiftKeyAndroid, iOS: <http://swiftkey.com/en>

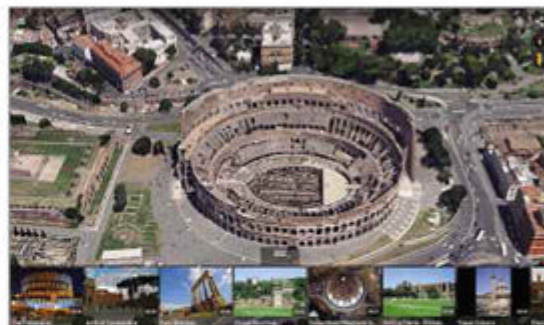
Take the sting out of texting with a keyboard that learns how you type, across your online accounts as well as on your phone and tablet – and with multi-lingual autocorrect that actually works.

17 REMOTE PC
Chrome Remote DesktopAndroid: www.snipca.com/17104iOS: www.snipca.com/17103

This brilliant Google app sidesteps the need to save PC files to Google Drive, Dropbox or wherever by giving you

remote access to your PC. Set-up is explained clearly online (www.snipca.com/17105).

Like the other Google apps in our countdown (and this won't be the last), Chrome Remote Desktop is secure – but even more so if you enable **two-factor authentication** for your Google Account (www.snipca.com/17095; also see Protect Your Tech, Issue 452).

**16** CALENDAR
SunriseAndroid, iOS: <https://calendar.sunrise.am>

Easily the best calendar app we've ever used. Sunrise combines your Google Calendar, Microsoft's Exchange, Facebook, Evernote and other accounts so you can see all your dates in one place. Automatically and securely syncs to the web as well as your phone and tablet.

15 LANGUAGES
Duolingo

Android, iOS, Windows Phone:

www.duolingo.com

Languages that bored you at school come to life with this free learning app. It takes a game-style approach by rewarding you with heart tokens as you advance through levels of bite-sized lessons.

14 TRAVEL
Google EarthAndroid, iOS: www.snipca.com/17113

It may not be Google Earth Pro (www.snipca.com/17114), and it may be rather too memory-hungry for smaller or older phones to handle, but the Google Earth app (see screenshot above) is still one of

the greatest gifts you can give your tablet. We particularly like the Wikipedia layers that reveals more about points of interest.

13 SYSTEM TOOL
Clean MasterAndroid: www.snipca.com/17013

Clear up after your apps and yourself with this Android version of the CCleaner-style PC junk remover (www.snipca.com/17059). Also lets you remove duplicate photos and prevent apps automatically running when you switch on your phone or tablet.

12 MUSIC
Google Play MusicAndroid: www.snipca.com/17093iOS: www.snipca.com/17094

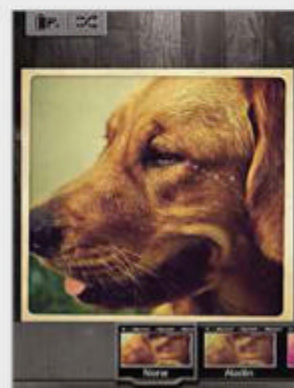
iTunes is one of our most-loathed tools, so we're delighted that Google's alternative now works on iPhone and iPad as well as Android. To get the best out of it, store your music on your PC, manage your library online (<https://music.google.com>) and download just the songs, albums or playlists you want with one tap, and then remove them with a tap when you've finished – just as we always wished we could do in iTunes.

PERFECT YOUR PHONE & TABLET PHOTOS

11 **Pixlr-o-matic**Android, iOS: <http://pixlr.com/o-matic>

If you want to collect loads of 'followers' and see Miley Cyrus's latest selfie, use Instagram. If you just want the best filters in any photo app and neither know nor care who or what Miley Cyrus (or indeed a selfie) is, use Pixlr-o-matic.

The app also includes excellent manual editing tools for perfecting your photos and lets you save as many versions as you want. You can share your creations on Facebook, Flickr and even Instagram with one tap if you like, but Pixlr-o-matic's priority is editing, not attention-seeking.



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Back Issue CD, which
you can now buy
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or by searching for
computeractive cd

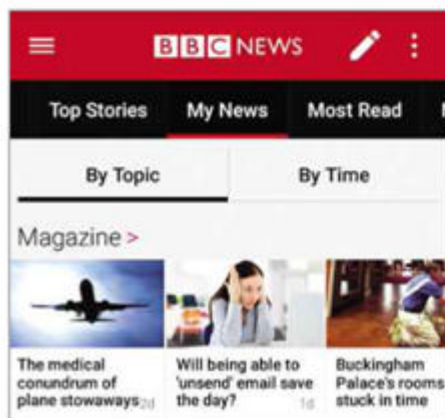


BEST FREE APPS EVER: 10 TO 4

10 NEWS
BBC NewsAndroid: www.snipca.com/17115iOS: www.snipca.com/17116

This time, Auntie Beeb's superb content gets the tool it deserves. We were so impressed by the redesigned BBC News app that we devoted Secret Tips to it in Issue 444.

What's so special? Well, you can create your own news feed using only the categories that interest you (with 65,000 topics on offer, you won't be stuck for choice); customise the way news stories look; stream the BBC News Channel; watch video clips in full-screen; share



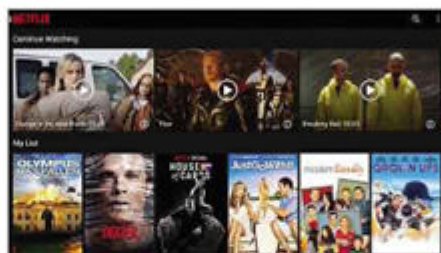
and comment on stories; see what everyone else is reading and watching. And if you'd rather read articles offline, you can export them to the next app in our chart.

9 READING
PocketAndroid, iOS: <https://getpocket.com>

Save unlimited numbers of news stories, articles and videos for coming back to when you're offline or in a more leisurely mood. You can save content from other apps by tapping the share icon, or from your PC by clicking the browser extension (www.snipca.com/17117).

8 TV & FILM
NetflixAndroid: www.snipca.com/17119iOS: www.snipca.com/17120

The main Netflix website (www.netflix.com) isn't half as good as the BBC iPlayer site, but the Netflix app could teach the iPlayer app a thing or two. It's designed to be as fast and responsive as possible without slowing down your phone or tablet, and it integrates automatically with your other devices, so if you stop



watching a film on one device you can pick up where you left off on another, including your PC and laptop.

The app is completely free and comes with one free month of full Netflix access. After that a subscription costs £6 a month, or you could use the new pay-as-you-go option (www.snipca.com/17130), which was announced just as we were writing this page. Are you watching us, Netflix?

7 READER
KindleAndroid, iOS, Windows Phone: www.snipca.com/17118

Amazon's free app can't quite morph your tablet (still less your phone) into a Kindle, but it gets it very close. Create or sign into your Kindle account to automatically download any books you've bought, read in comfort and then pick up where you left off on any device, much like Netflix.

6 WEATHER
Weather UndergroundAndroid, iOS: www.snipca.com/17121

BBC Weather (www.snipca.com/17122) is more stylish and Yahoo Weather (www.snipca.com/17123) more photogenic, and both are excellent forecasters – but only



Weather Underground keeps us hooked. You can see changing weather patterns on an interactive map, track moon phases and sunset times, and even contribute to the app's accuracy by reporting your observations.

4 PHOTOS
Google PhotosAndroid, iOS: photos.google.com/apps

Another Google app, seriously? Yes, because it's amazing. We're not biased for or against any company here – we just want great apps, for entirely selfish reasons.

Our Workshop in Issue 452 covered the basics of using the app to back up all your photos and videos (yes, all of them, as long as they're not individually gigantic), sort them into albums and edit them online, but there's so much more you can do. Open a photo and tap the icons at the bottom to share it, edit it using built-in tools, view metadata, set it as your wallpaper, print it, add it to a slideshow... look, we're running out of space, unlike our Google Photos account. Just download it.

GET PAID-FOR APPS FOR FREE

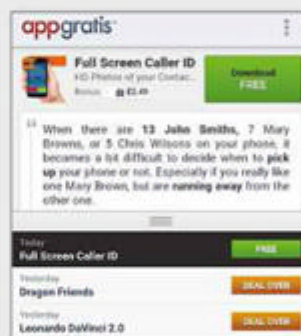
5 AppGratis

Android:

www.snipca.com/17125

In Issue 442, we used a whole cover feature to explain how to download paid-for software for free. To get paid-for apps for free, all you need is AppGratis.

Every day, AppGratis lets you download a premium app for free, completely safely and legally. The download window is 24 hours, but once you've



downloaded the app via AppGratis you can use it forever without having to pay.

Apple kicked AppGratis out of the App Store years ago, but all is not lost if you're an iPhone or iPad user: go to <http://appgratis.com/gb> and sign up for the daily email to get

your daily iOS freebie. We signed up three years ago and it's probably saved us more than £100 since.

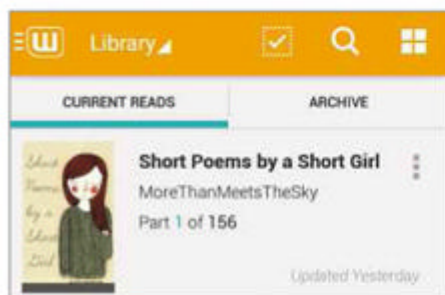
BEST FREE APPS EVER: TOP THREE

3 FREE EBOOKS
WattpadAndroid: www.snipca.com/17128iOS: www.snipca.com/17129

Wattpad is a kind of People's Kindle, a huge community of readers and writers built on a library of more than 40 million free ebooks.

Download books and stories to read anywhere, add them to a reading list, follow similar stories as they're written – and if you're feeling so inspired, create your own ebook using the app.

There's a strong fan-fiction element (fantasy and *Harry Potter* are particular



'fanfic' favourites) and oodles of fantasy books, but there are thousands of classics and contemporary novels here, too.

Wattpad is the perfect home for social features that just seem annoying in other apps. We've never understood why you'd want to share photos of your dinner with strangers, but we definitely get the appeal of sharing lists of your favourite books with like-minded readers.

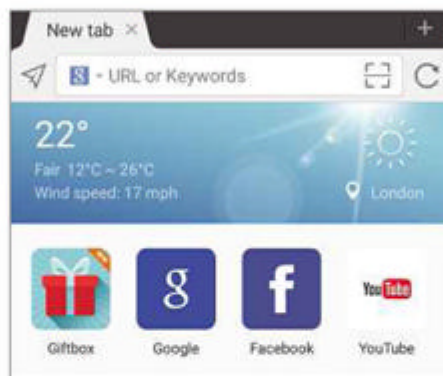
2 BROWSER
Maxthon Cloud Browser

Android, iOS, Windows Phone:

www.maxthon.com

Phone and tablet browsers tend either to do lots of things or be fast. Maxthon's mobile browser manages both.

Beyond the Chrome-style 'Quick Access' home screen (see screenshot above right) you'll find proper browser tabs, built-in file and task managers, Adblock Plus,



full-screen browsing (which can make all the difference on tiddly screens), support for **RSS**, and customisable gesture controls that make Maxthon feel more personal than other mobile browsers.

Whatever phone or tablet you're using, you get loads of control over how the browser looks and behaves, and in our experience it's the only mobile browser that feels as powerful as the browser on your PC.

1 MESSAGES, PHOTOS, FILES, LISTS, CONTACTS, WEB LINKS...
PushbulletAndroid, iOS: www.pushbullet.com/apps

So here it is, pop pickers: our favourite free app of all time. It wasn't a difficult decision. Pushbullet is simple, useful and blindingly efficient, and we'd happily be marooned on a desert island with it (a data signal would be handy, though).

Unlike some of the other apps in our countdown, Pushbullet is very easy to explain: send what you want to the device or person you want. Send a text message, photo, document, enormous video file, web link – anything.

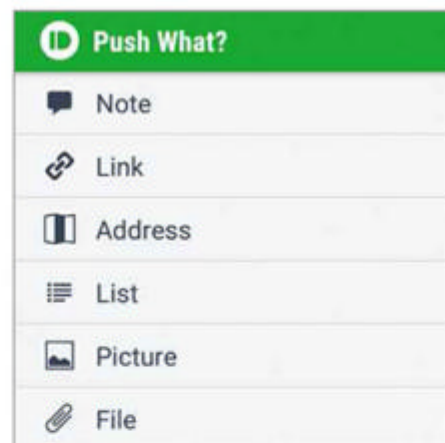
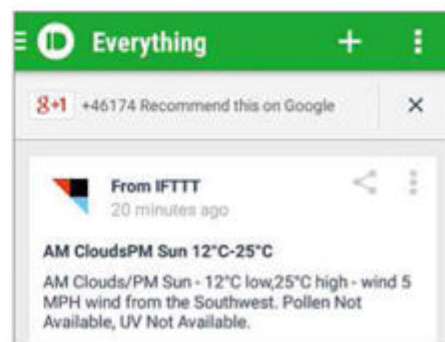
It's cheaper than **SMS** because it's all done via Wi-Fi (and mobile data if you choose), more reliable than WhatsApp and easier and quicker than sharing via cloud services like Dropbox.

You can choose to get notifications on your PC as well as your phone and tablet,

so you never miss incoming 'pushes'. Everything you send and receive is saved securely in your Pushbullet account for easy access from anywhere.

Pushbullet has its own IFTTT channel (<https://ifttt.com/pushbullet>), so you can use your If app (page 52) to get regular automated pushes. For example, we get the day's weather pushed to us at 6am (see screenshot below).

The downside? Well, it's not a chat app like WhatsApp, but you can easily use it for conversations if your recipient has Pushbullet as well. The main drawback is that you can't send multiple files at once,



but we've found a way round that, too: merge multiple files into a ZIP, and send that. But to be honest, Pushbullet is so fast and simple that you may as well just send files one by one. **Ca**

A WORD ABOUT OUR NEXT ISSUE...

As you may know **Windows 10** – a free upgrade for all Windows 7 and 8 users – launches on 29 July. We've received countless emails from readers asking us what to do when it arrives, so our next

issue is a **Windows 10: Should You Upgrade?** special. We're expecting an extremely high demand for this issue, so we're printing some extra copies of *Computeractive*. They will probably sell very quickly, so

please make a note in your diary of when the issue is available in the shops:

Weds 22 July.

Regards

Daniel Booth
Editor



ON SALE
22 July

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PART 3

Get your PC ready for Windows 10



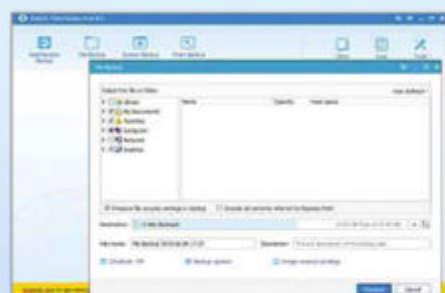
In the final part of our series, Jonathan Parkyn shows you how to back up all your data before installing the new operating system

Back up your files

To back up your files you'll need a backup program and somewhere to store your backups. For most people this means an external drive of at least 500GB in size.

Windows 7 and 8/8.1 both come with built-in backup tools, but there are often compatibility problems between different Windows versions. Backups made in Windows 7 are not directly compatible with Windows 8.1, for example, and we expect similar problems when restoring older backups in Windows 10.

So it's safer to use a third-party backup tool, such as EaseUS Todo Backup Free (www.snipca.com/16844 – ignore the prompts to buy a licence). The latest



Use EaseUS Todo Backup Free to back up files before you upgrade

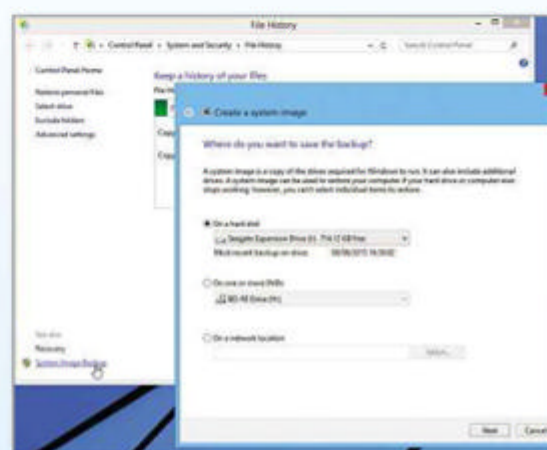
version already supports Windows 10, as well as previous versions of Windows back to XP. Install and run the program before you upgrade, then click File Backup, choose what you want to back up and click Proceed.

Back up your entire system

Windows 7 and 8.1 include built-in tools for saving a system image, a large backup file that contains your files, programs, settings and Windows itself (see the Microsoft website for more info: www.snipca.com/16942).


With system image backups, there won't be any compatibility problems between Windows 7 or 8.1 and Windows 10.

In Windows 7, click Start, type **backup** and press Enter, then click 'Create a system image' on the left and follow the steps. You'll need an external drive with enough free space to accommodate your local hard drive's used space. You should also use the 'Create a system repair disc' option to make a DVD boot disc from which you can restore your system.



Make a system image before you upgrade, so you can roll back if things go wrong

In Windows 8.1, type **file history** and click the File History link. In the window that opens, click the System Image Backup link in the bottom left-hand corner and follow the steps. Click Start again and type **recovery**, then click 'Create a Recovery Drive' to create a boot disc on a DVD or USB stick. Untick the option to copy the recovery partition, click Next and follow the instructions.

If you're using an older version of Windows you'll need to use a third-party tool to make a system-image backup. In EaseUS Todo Backup Free, click the System Backup option on the program's main page and follow the steps. Once you've made your backup, click Tools, then Create Emergency Disk to make a bootable rescue DVD or USB stick. 

WHY BACK UP BEFORE YOU UPGRADE?

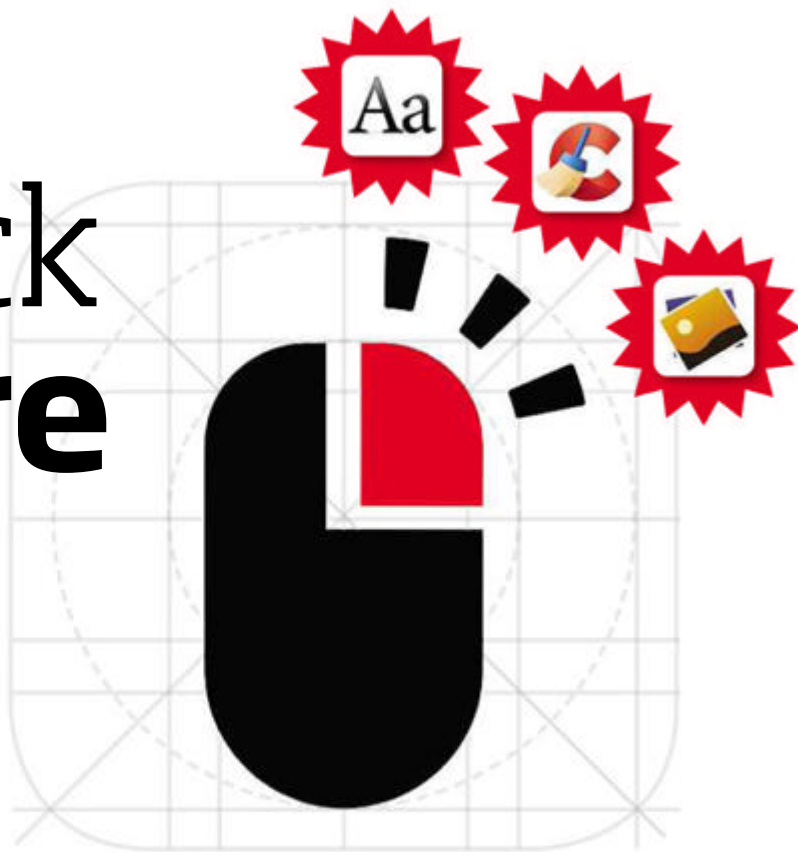
Windows 10 will be easier to install than previous versions. If you're upgrading to Windows 10 from 7 or 8/8.1, the process only takes a few clicks using Windows Update, and should have minimal impact on your files and programs. It's much easier than the clean install you'll have to do if you're upgrading from Windows XP, Vista or another operating system (OS).

So why should you bother backing up your data in Windows 7 or 8/8.1? It may seem unnecessary, but it's still important because plenty can still go wrong. The Windows 10 installation process will rewrite key system files, so if it doesn't quite go to plan you could end up with a PC that won't start, or with files you can no longer access.

● Should you upgrade when Windows 10 is released on 29 July? Or should you wait? In next issue's cover feature we'll help you decide.

Right-click software secrets

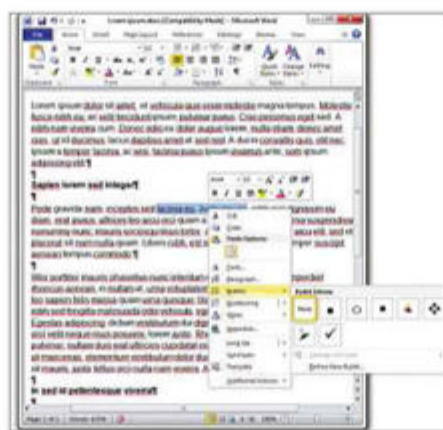
Your favourite programs' best features are hidden in the right-click menu. Jane Hoskyn reveals how to make software even better with a click



Right-click a file in Windows, and what do you see? Save, Delete, Copy, 'Open with' and, for when you're in an investigative mood, Properties. You may not be able to recite the right-click menu by heart, but you use it so often it's almost auto-pilot.

It's surprising, then, that we don't make more use of right-click menus in other software. Programs you use every day have their very own right-click ('context') menus that contain useful shortcuts and hidden administrative tools. Even Microsoft's own programs bury their cleverest tricks behind the lesser-clicked button on your mouse.

Right-click to edit faster in Word Word (2010 and later) is easier to use than the mind-boggling array of Ribbons, tabs and menus at the top would have you believe. Open a document, select text and right-click, and you'll see what I mean. The right-click menu grants quick access to all those editing tools you've struggled to find in the tabs.



Edit, reformat and even translate text from the right-click menu in Word

These shortcuts range from the simple (click Font to edit the appearance of your selected text) to the "ooh, that's clever" (click Styles, then Select All Text With Similar Formatting to automatically select any text in the document that has common characteristics – such as bold or underlined). You can also look up synonyms for your selected word or

phrase from the right-click menu, and translate to and from dozens of languages.

Alternatively, right-click without selecting any text, and choose a font or format for the entire document. Click Additional Actions at the foot of the right-click menu, then Options, to enable or disable AutoCorrect habits such as automatically changing 1/2 to ½ (supposedly useful; actually annoying).

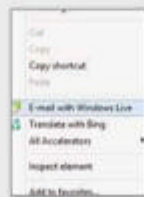
When you're in Print Layout, you can even right-click to edit the space at the top and bottom of your documents. Click Edit Header or Edit Footer to add or configure information such as a page-number sequence, which is useful for keeping long documents organised. Press Esc to finish.

Right-clicking a file in Word's Recent list is, by contrast, the very definition of disappointment. There are no Explorer-style options such as Rename or Print; just Open, Copy, 'Pin to list' and 'Unpin from list' – the latter two are pretty redundant, because it's easier to click the pin icon.

RIGHT-CLICK IE WHILE YOU CAN

Internet Explorer (IE) is the perennial bridesmaid when we talk about browsers (and it's now being edged out by Edge, www.snipca.com/16963 – see our Workshop, page 35). But its right-click options are superb – so catch them while you can.

The menu differs according to the item you right-click, but in most cases you can create a shortcut to it, download it, print it, use it as your IE wallpaper ('Set as background') or attach it to a Windows Live email (this now opens automatically in Outlook.com). Edge looks to be a right-click winner, too, with the option to right-click a word or phrase and 'Ask Cortana' to tell you all about it.



Right-click to clean faster and safer in CCleaner

If you're happy to let CCleaner run the show, all you ever need to do is open it and click Run Cleaner. But if you want more control over what's deleted, you need a few right-click tricks.

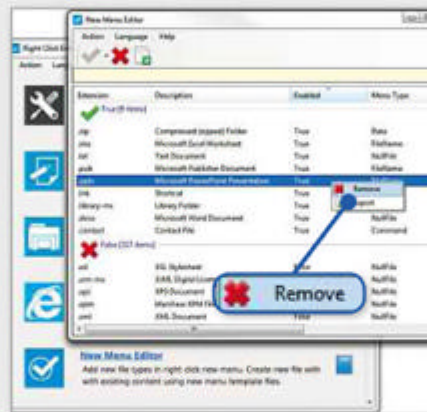
First, let the Windows and Applications tabs populate as usual. Right-click a heading (such as Internet or Multimedia) and select 'Check all' or 'Uncheck all' to tick or untick all items in that category, or



REMOVE MICROSOFT'S RIGHT-CLICK JUNK

The right-click menus in Explorer and on your Desktop haven't changed much in years, and there are some you'll never use. Do you really need the array of Microsoft junk that opens when you right-click your Desktop and click New, for example? If you really wanted to create a Microsoft Publisher document, you'd open Publisher.

There's no easy way to disable these pointless shortcuts using the Control Panel (Microsoft won't give up its defaults that easily). Instead, you need a third-party tool such as the free, portable version of Right Click Enhancer (www.snipca.com/16953), which is really a suite of tools. Download and extract the zip file, run the program as administrator (by right-clicking, of course, and selecting 'Run as administrator') and then click New



Menu Editor. Click Run if prompted by Windows. Right-click an item listed under True and select Remove (see screenshot) to clear it from your Desktop's right-click

New menu.

Right Click Enhancer also lets you remove unwanted programs from the 'Open with' menu; remove or disable right-click options in Internet Explorer; and add new options to many of your PC's right-click menus. It's a great set of tools that in total takes up less than 1MB of your PC's hard-drive space.

If you can't clear an item using Right Click Enhancer, try a Registry hack. Open Registry Editor by typing **regedit** into Start and pressing Enter. To remove an item from the Desktop's New list, click **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT** and look for a file type (.ppt means PowerPoint, for example). Expand the folder and its sub-folders until you find ShellNew, right-click it then click Delete.

'Restore default state' to let CCleaner decide what to tick.

Scroll to an item whose junk status you want to investigate (Office 2010 in our screenshot below). Then right-click it and click Analyze to see a summary of the item's junk data in the text window. Right-click the window and select 'Save to text file...' to save its details to your PC.

To take a closer look at the junk, right-click the window and click 'View detailed results'. Scroll down the detailed view and, if you spot a file you want to exclude from the clean, right-click it and click 'Add to Exclude list'. You can investigate further by selecting 'Open containing folder', which opens the file in Explorer (if supported for that file type).

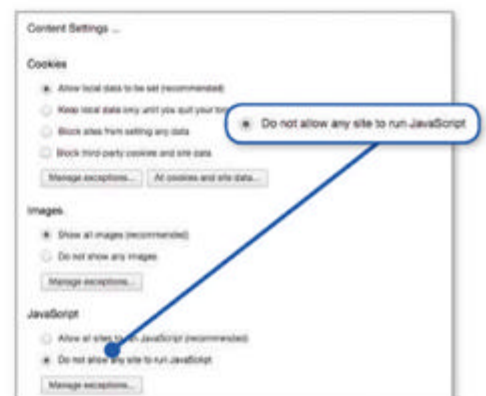
Right-click and select 'View summary

results' to return to the summary view, then right-click and click Clean to remove junk files for that item.

Right-click to download anything from the web


You probably know a couple of right-click browser tricks already. We mention one on page 61 (right-click a blocked **plug-in** to run it). Then there's the "right-click save" trick, which has been around since the dawn of online photos: to download a photo, right-click it and click Save Picture As (or 'Save image as' – it varies between browsers and operating systems). Likewise, save selected text to your clipboard by right-clicking and clicking Copy.

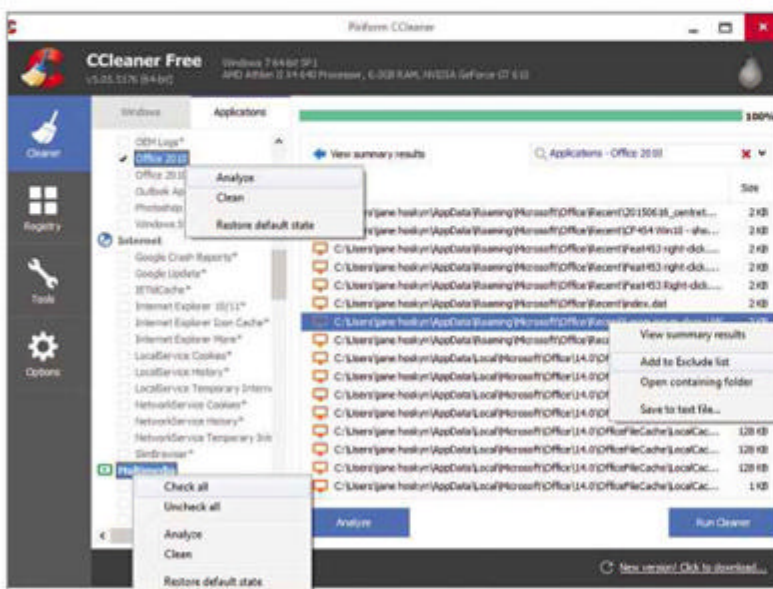
But what if the photo or text doesn't



Disable Javascript temporarily to enable right-clicking for restricted content

want to be saved or even selected? Some sites protect their content by embedding safe JavaScript **code** that blocks right-clicking. However, this is the internet, a place where copyright is seldom respected, so there are free extensions like RightToClick for Firefox (www.snipca.com/16962) and RightToCopy for Chrome (www.snipca.com/16961) that override these right-click restrictions. Similar extensions, including Allow Right Click (no longer in Chrome's Web Store) have been found to contain adware, so heed the advice in our feature on page 60.

You can make right-clicking work without extensions by disabling JavaScript. In Chrome, for example, go to Settings and click 'Show advanced settings', then click 'Content settings' under Privacy and click 'Do not allow any site to run JavaScript'. Make sure to re-enable it afterwards, or some sites won't load properly. 



CCleaner is full of right-click options for analysing items in close detail

Extensions you must stop using

Extensions may be slowing down your PC or even making it unsafe. Jonathan Parkyn reveals the browser tools that do more harm than good



Browser **extensions** are handy tools that add extra options to your browsing experience, such as blocking adverts or letting you watch films that would normally be blocked in the UK. They're free, small and easily added to your browser with one click – but they may not always be the blessing they appear.

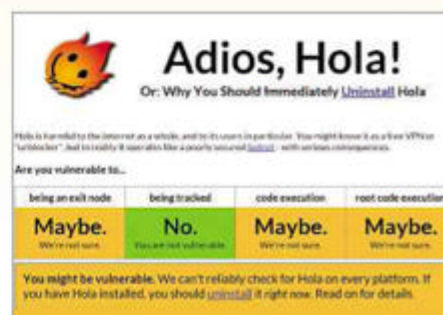
A recent spate of scares has revealed that extensions can secretly sap your PC's resources or even make your computer unsafe. Indeed, Google yanked 200

extensions from its Chrome Web Store earlier this year after they were found to be stealing users' data.

Here, we'll unmask the browser extensions you should avoid, and suggest better, safer alternatives.

Remove Hola to make your PC safe

Free Chrome and Firefox extension Hola (<http://hola.org>) lets you bypass geographical restrictions imposed by sites such as Netflix, so you can view content



Independent site Adios Hola explains in detail why Hola may be unsafe

wherever you are in the world. It's amazingly useful, and we used to love it until it was recently revealed to be unsafe, exposing users' computers to a number of vulnerabilities, including activity tracking and remote control by hackers. It has even been accused of enabling **botnet** attacks – find out more on Adios Hola (<http://adios-hola.org>), an independent site set up to warn users of Hola's potential dangers.

Hola has since been pulled from the Chrome Web Store and Firefox's Add-ons site; like many extensions, it was never available for Internet Explorer (IE). If you've got it installed, remove it now. In Chrome, click the menu button, select 'More tools', Extensions, then click the bin icon next to Hola. In Firefox, click the



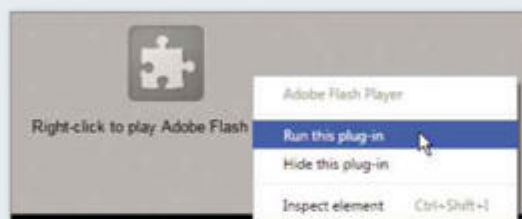
Click the bin icon on Chrome's Extensions page to remove Hola or any other extension

PLAY SAFE WITH CLICK-TO-PLAY

Extensions often trigger Flash animations and other content that can slow down your PC and even make it unsafe. To reduce the risk, enable 'click-to-play' in your browser settings. This blocks Flash and other **plug-ins** by default, letting you play only the content you want.

As well as improving security, click-to-play can reduce bandwidth consumption and lower memory and processor usage, making pages load quicker and reducing the overall impact on your system speed.

To switch it on in Chrome, click the menu button and select Settings, then click 'Show advanced settings'. Under Privacy, click the 'Content settings' button. Scroll down to Plug-ins, tick 'Let me choose when to run plug-in content', then click Finished. Now you'll see a placeholder image (usually a grey



jigsaw piece) where Flash animations would normally be. Right-click and select 'Run this plug-in' to load the content (see screenshot). A similar feat can be achieved in Firefox by installing the free Flashblock extension (www.snipca.com/16924).

In IE, click the menu button, then 'Manage Add-ons'. Right-click Shockwave Flash Object and select 'More information', then click 'Remove all sites', followed by Close. You'll now see a message asking you to permit Flash content whenever it's available on a page you visit.



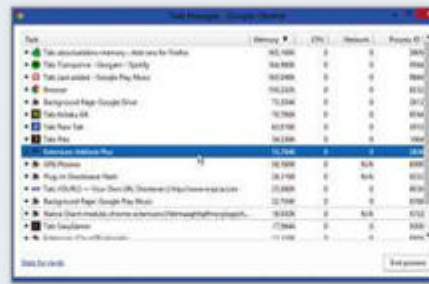
WHY ADBLOCK PLUS ISN'T PERFECT

Advert-blockers like Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>) are among our favourite types of extension – but they're not without problems of their own.

Last year, it was found that Adblock Plus, with more than 50 million users, was guilty of inordinate memory usage. Its Firefox version is especially memory-sapping, consuming anything up to 2GB of RAM at a time.

Its developers have been working round the clock to improve the situation, and post regular updates in the Adblock Plus blog (<https://adblockplus.org/blog>).

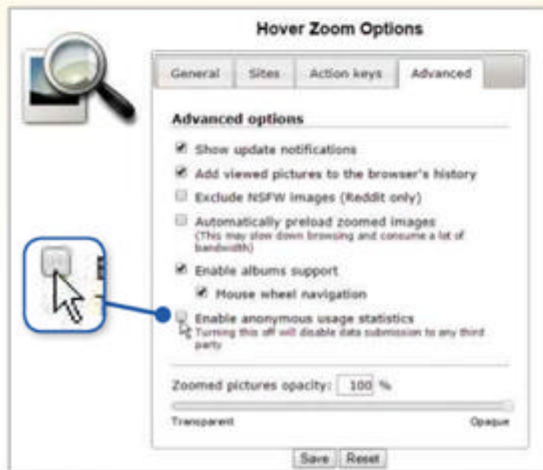
Besides the memory issues, Adblock Plus is a brilliant tool, so this definitely



isn't one to rush to uninstall. However, if your PC is getting on or slowing down and you need a more lightweight advert-blocker, try uBlock (Chrome www.snipca.com/16920, Firefox www.snipca.com/16919).

It's easy to find out if any extensions are hogging resources. In Chrome, click the menu button, select 'More tools' and then click 'Task manager' to see a list of tabs, plug-ins, extensions and other processes running in your browser (see screenshot). Click the Memory column header to see which processes are using the most system memory.

Firefox doesn't have a task manager, but the free extension 'about:addons-memory' (www.snipca.com/16923) performs a similar function. Once it's installed, open a fresh tab and type <about:addons-memory> for a list of what's gobbling up the most memory.



Disable 'anonymous usage statistics' to stop Hover Zoom sharing information about you

menu button, Add-ons, Extensions, then click Remove next to Hola.

If you want to continue beating internet restrictions, use free VPN tool CyberGhost (www.snipca.com/16917) instead.

Stop Hover Zoom tracking you

Hover Zoom for Chrome (www.snipca.com/16916) gives you instant enlargements of thumbnail images when you hover over them. With almost 1.4 million users, it's a very popular extension.

However, scroll down the information panel to the right on the page above and you'll see that you will be permitting Hover Zoom to collect your browsing data and share it with third parties.

Happily, you can disable this dubious data-collecting activity. Go to Extensions in Chrome (as

described above), click Options under Hover Zoom, click the Advanced tab and then untick 'Enable anonymous usage statistics' (see screenshot left).

Alternatively, uninstall Hover Zoom and use Windows' built-in Magnifier instead (click Start, type [magnifier](#) and press Enter).

Banish extensions that target you with adverts

Have you noticed of late an increasing number of adverts appearing on web pages you view? If so, your browser extensions could be to blame.

Extensions that are safe in themselves are often bought from their developers then bundled with adware. This is exactly what happened to the 'Add to Feedly' extension, for example, whose developer revealed his regret about selling it (www.snipca.com/16943). It's

also been revealed that Mail Checker Plus For Google Mail now contains adware (www.snipca.com/16944) – as do many others.


One Chrome extension you should definitely use is Shield For Chrome (www.snipca.com/16922), which is free and blocks extensions known to be infected with adware or malware.

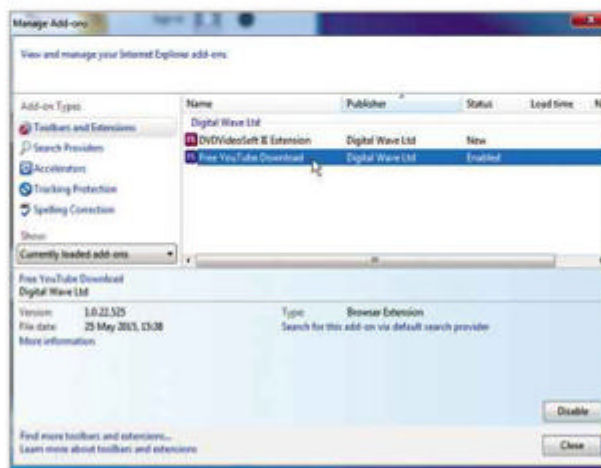
Delete uninvited extensions

Your browser may include extensions you never installed or authorised. Sometimes, extensions (like toolbars and search engines) are automatically installed along with third-party programs, so check your extensions list regularly for anything that shouldn't be there.

Even Internet Explorer, which supports far fewer extensions, isn't immune from this problem. Click IE's cog icon and select Manage Add-ons to see what's installed under each of the Add-on Types on the left, then click Disable for any you don't want.

If you're unsure about a particular extension, type its name into the free online tool Should I Remove It? (www.shouldiremoveit.com) for further information about it.

If you've tried to remove an extension but it keeps coming back, you should remove the program that installed it. The YouTube download tool DVDVideoSoft, for example, is known to install browser extensions that can be very difficult to get rid of. We'd also recommend running AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/16945). 



Extensions are sometimes installed by other programs – and they may come back when you try to delete them

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

What file properties am I unable to copy?

Q I tried to copy some digital photos from my Windows 7 laptop on to a USB memory stick that someone had given me. When I did this Windows displayed a dialogue box headed 'Property Loss', which contained the following message: "Are you sure you want to copy this file without its properties? The file has properties that can't be copied to the new location".

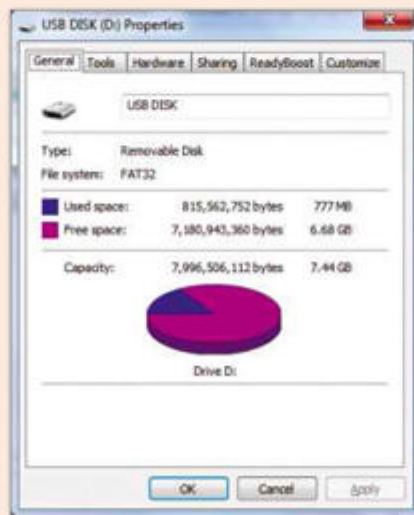
I have no idea what this means, but I don't want to lose data. What is this about, and what should I do?

Mark Sterner

A This is happening because the memory stick is using a different type of file system to that of your Windows 7 PC, which uses **NTFS**. Though we can't be absolutely certain, there's a very high probability that your USB stick has been formatted using the older **FAT32** file system, because this allows for better compatibility with non-Windows devices.

The NTFS file system allows more **metadata** to be attached to files and folders than FAT32, so this is what would be lost if you went ahead with copying. Metadata is extra information added to a file or folder that isn't itself essential. To see a file or folder's metadata in Windows, right-click it and choose Properties. Digital photos, for instance, have metadata relating to the image resolution, camera make and model, exposure and so forth.

We can't say conclusively what specific metadata would be lost because it depends on the files in question, but, for example, you'd lose Windows 7's Previous Versions tab. Just to be clear, by proceeding you will **NOT** lose of any your files' actual data. This means your photos will be exactly the same photos and we can say for sure that, in Windows, they'll retain the



You may need to reformat your USB stick from FAT32 to back up files from your PC

Details tab that lists the aforementioned information.

Much of the time, then, this message isn't anything to worry about. However, if you want, you can retain the metadata by converting the USB stick's file system to the more modern NTFS. The process is quick, easy and doesn't ordinarily delete any data, but it's wise to back up anything stored on the stick just in case.

Next, if you're not sure of the key's drive letter, launch Windows Explorer to check (press Windows key+E). Now click Start, type **cmd** into the Search box and press Enter. This opens a Command window. At the command prompt, carefully type the following: **convert X: /fs:ntfs**, replacing **X:** with the drive letter of your USB stick. Press Enter to carry out this command, but because there's no confirmation, you should check what you've typed and the drive letter carefully.

When you press Enter, the memory stick will be converted – it could take a few minutes. When it's finished, close the Command window. and then your USB stick is formatted.

How do I block BT's advertising?

Q How can I get rid of or reduce the size of the advertisement that appears on the right-hand side of the BT Mail page when I log in?

B Haigh

A This is a standard web-advertising unit that can be blanked out by using one of the many ad-blocking tools that exist.

You didn't tell us which browser you use but it doesn't matter because one of the most popular tools – Adblock Plus – is available for all main browsers. Visit <https://adblockplus.org> and then click the green Install button: the website will detect your browser and download the appropriate version.

Once installed, operation is more or less the same across all major browsers but if you just want to block adverts, there's nothing else to do – Adblock Plus will automatically block almost all of them.

If you want to manage how it works then click the Adblock Plus button in your browser's toolbar and choose Settings. To see this button in Internet Explorer, you'll first need to enable the Status bar: open the View menu, point to Toolbars then tick 'Status bar'. To allow a specified site to display adverts, tap its web address into the Manage Blocking box then click Add. If you'd prefer to let Adblock Plus decide which sites can display adverts, tick the 'Allow some non-intrusive advertising' box.



Manage which web sites display adverts in Adblock Plus's settings

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Why is File Explorer so slow?

Q I had a major hard-drive failure and am now reviewing recovered files on my Windows 8.1 PC, deleting any rubbish as I go. I have placed all the recovered files on to a separate **partition** and am using File Explorer to carry out the job. I use the search box to locate unwanted files, which sometimes results in a list of thousands. The search itself takes ages, but I'm fine with that. What bothers me is when I then hit delete, File Explorer displays a "Preparing to recycle the files" message and spends forever processing the job. Along with this, there's an awful lot of drive activity and **processor** usage, and it's so slow as to be comical. My PC is new and regularly maintained, using tools recommended by your magazine, so why is File Explorer being so inefficient?

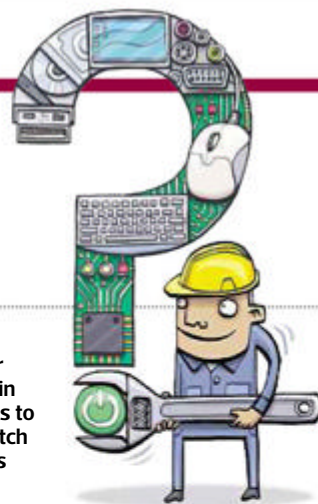
Alan Brown



A File Explorer is slow, just like Windows Explorer before it. However, we can narrow down the specific cause of this particular sluggishness. The answer is because the files are being sent to the Recycle Bin, rather than being deleted permanently.

When the Recycle Bin is enabled File Explorer has to first make copies of a file and then mark the original as deleted – so it's doing twice the work. In fact, it's

Disable your Recycle Bin in its Properties to speed up batch file deletions



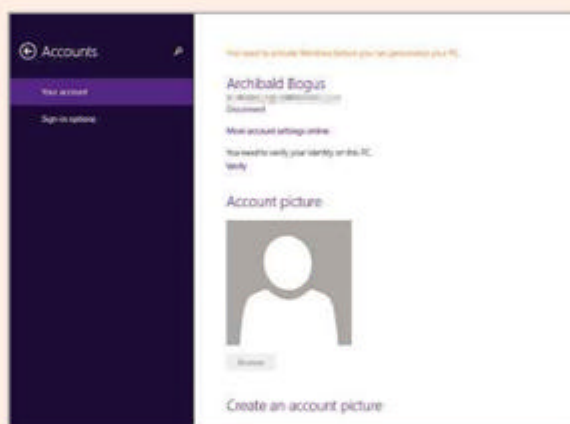
really doing more than twice the work because copying a file takes far longer than simply deleting it, where in reality all that happens is that the space occupied by the deleted file is marked as available storage. Multiply this work by the thousands of files you're working with and you'll understand the cause of your frustration.

One easy solution is simply to hold down the Shift key before hitting Delete (Del) – this will instruct File Explorer to skip the Recycle Bin and delete the files permanently. Alternatively, disable Recycle Bin for the drive you're working on, which might speed things up for you. Right-click the Recycle Bin icon on the Windows 8.1 Desktop and choose Properties. Click the relevant drive then select 'Don't move files to the Recycle Bin. Remove files immediately when deleted', and click OK.

Can I access the Windows Store without a Microsoft account?

Q Trying to install Microsoft's free Solitaire app on my Windows 8.1 PC has caused no end of hassle. I have had a Hotmail account for 12 years, so I have a Microsoft account and password, but the download required me to re-register with Outlook. As I did this, I refused the option to save documents and photographs automatically to the cloud storage and continued the registration, and the app downloaded fine. Next time I switched on my PC, I was asked for a password, which is not necessary for my purposes. I didn't want this hassle so I restored my PC to an earlier state. But is there an easy way to download apps without these problems?

John Bowen



You will need to set up a Microsoft account to install Modern-style apps from the Windows Store

A It's not possible to download Modern-style apps from the Windows Store without logging in with a Microsoft account. The Microsoft Solitaire Collection is a

Modern-style app so if you want it, you'll need to log in.

As you've already jumped through some of Microsoft's hoops you could temporarily switch your Windows 8.1 back so that it uses a Microsoft account, letting you download from the Windows Store, before switching back again once you've installed the apps you want.

You've effectively already done that but you used System Restore, which is a something of a sledgehammer solution. Next time, press Windows key+C to open the **charms bar**, then click Settings followed by 'Change PC settings'. Next, click Accounts followed by 'Connect to a Microsoft account' or 'Disconnect' (as appropriate) then follow the prompts.

Problems Solved

How do I delete a password saved by Internet Explorer?

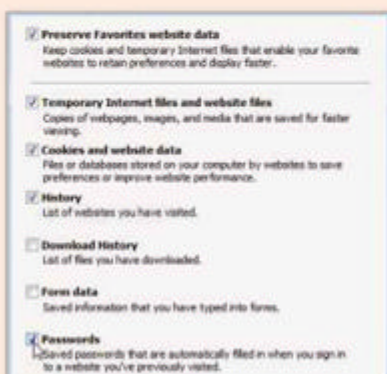
Q How can I get my Windows 7 PC to forget a username and password for a website? I accidentally clicked the option to remember the password and, unfortunately, I'd also entered the wrong details. Now, every time I go to the page to log in, I can't get anywhere at all and have to use my husband's laptop. Any ideas?

Linda Brightman

A We're guessing you did this in Internet Explorer (IE)? Frustratingly, with IE11 in Windows 7, you can't manage saved passwords individually.

You can delete all your stored passwords, but you'll then have to re-enter login details for any websites you visit. To do this, click the cog icon at the top right then click 'Internet options'. Now select the Content tab, click Settings in the AutoComplete section, then 'Delete AutoComplete history', tick Password, then clear all other boxes, and click Delete.

If you'd prefer to delete just this particular username and password, download NirSoft's free IE PassView tool from www.snipca.com/16745. Note that your security software may wrongly identify this as a virus (it isn't). Right-click the relevant entry then click Delete Selected Items followed by OK.



Delete all passwords stored in IE via the browser's settings

Where's my helpful XP puppy gone?

Q On my trusty Windows XP computer I have friendly puppy that appears whenever I search for old files and pictures. I can't find this little chap on my new Windows 7 laptop – has he strayed? When I use the search bar in Windows 7's Start menu it just doesn't work like the XP doggy does.

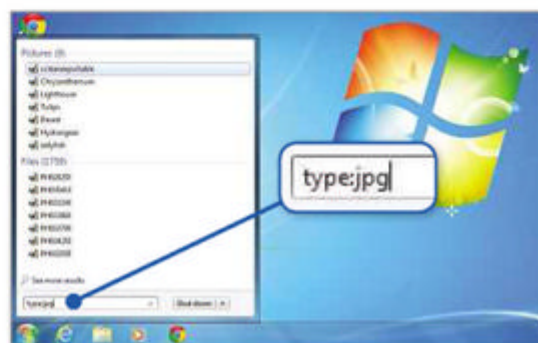
Jean Hardcastle

A We're afraid Microsoft took the pup to the pound. Windows 7's search bar is both fast and flexible, but it is very far from obvious how to apply search filters, which is what XP's pooch effectively offered.

For example, you can restrict searches to a particular file type by typing the command **type:** followed by the file type and, if you want, part of the file name. So, to search for JPEG images (which have a .jpg file extension) you'd type **type:jpg**. To narrow the search to JPEG images with file names containing the word 'family',

you'd type **type:jpg family**.

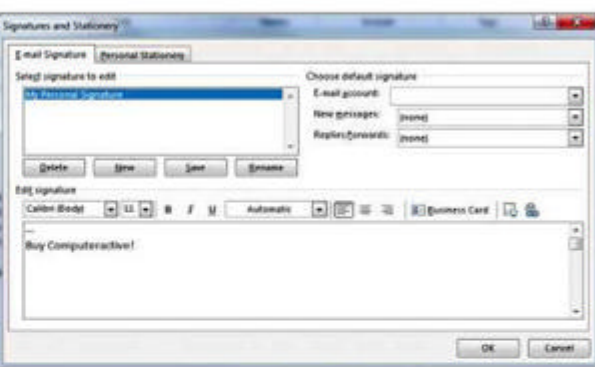
Alternatively, if you press Windows key+E to open Windows Explorer, you can add filters by clicking links, a method that's closer conceptually to XP's dog. Type your search term in the search bar at the top right and then click one of the links under the 'Add a search filter' heading that appears below. These filters change depending on the content of the drive or folder being searched. For more info about using filters with Windows 7's search, read Microsoft's tutorial at www.snipca.com/16742.



In Windows 7, search for specific types of file or file names by entering the **type:** command

How do I create an email signature in Outlook 2013?

Q I'm quite new to email and computers in general. I notice that some of my friends have added text at the end of their messages, like witty sayings or their home address. I'm assuming that they don't type these out every time, so they must be saved somewhere. I have a Windows 8.1 laptop with Office 2013, and I use Outlook 2013 for email. How can I do this?



Create a number of signatures for different emails in 'Signatures and Stationery' via Outlook 2013's settings

Betty Lewis

A What you describe are known as 'signatures', and they're easy to enable in Outlook 2013. First, click File followed by Options and then Mail. Next, click the Signatures button in the 'Compose messages'

section. In the 'Signatures and Stationery' dialogue box, click New, type a name for the signature, then type whatever you want into the 'Edit signature' box. Add more in the same way, then click OK. To choose a signature, click New Email, then click the Signature button in the Include category on the Message tab, then select the signature you want from the dropdown menu.

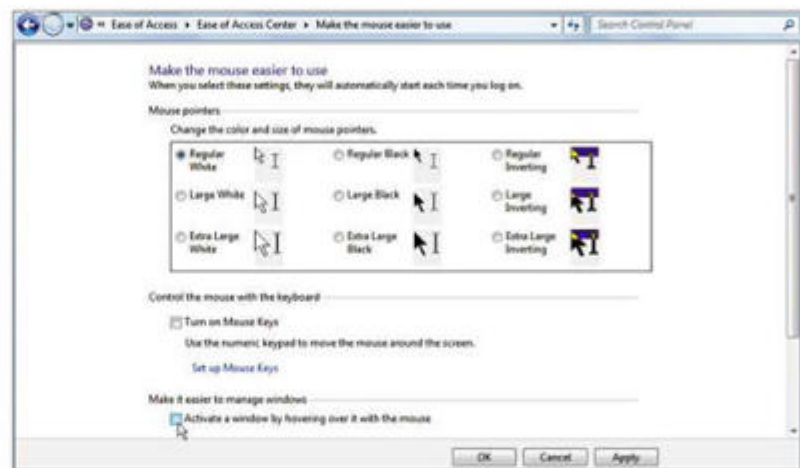
Why does my mouse scroll wheel stop working?

Q When using my mouse's wheel the ability to scroll will suddenly stop. I have to left-click the browser window to activate scrolling again. This also occurs when I am typing, so I have to left-click to activate the page. My PC runs Windows 7.

Roy Saxton

A It sounds like your current application window is losing 'focus', which is the term used to describe when another window becomes active. This can happen in a variety of ways, such as use of Windows' accessibility features or some background tool stealing focus for whatever reason.

Try pushing the mouse pointer beyond the boundaries of the application window, to see if you lose focus. If that



Stop your current application window losing focus and disabling your scroll wheel by clearing this tickbox in 'Ease of Access' settings

happens, click Start followed by Control Panel and then 'Ease of Access' followed by 'Change how your mouse works': if there's a tick in the 'Activate a window by hovering over it with the mouse' box, clear it and click OK.

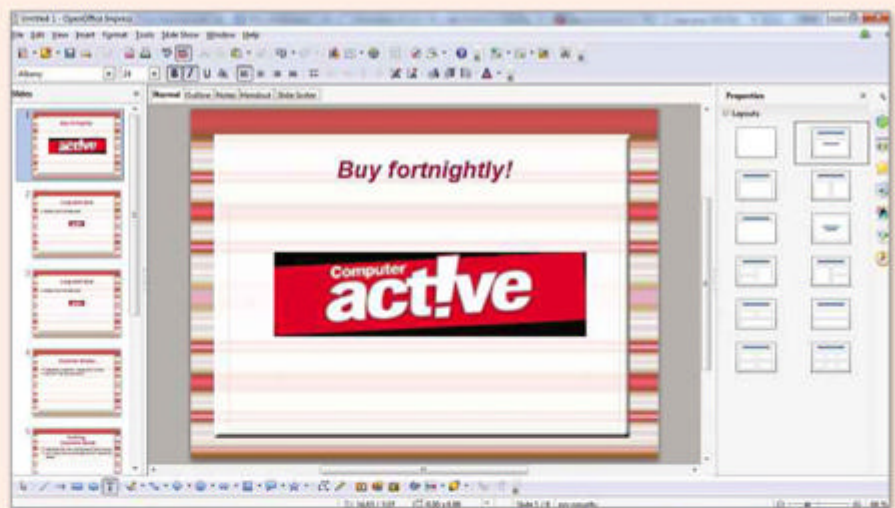
If not, try disabling programs that launch with Windows. Click Start, type **msconfig** in the search bar and press

Enter. In the System Configuration box, click Startup. Disable the first item, then restart your PC to see if the problem is fixed. Otherwise, return to System Configuration, re-enable the first item and disable the second. Repeat until you find the culprit, then look in that application's settings to see if there's an option to stop it stealing focus.

How do I print my Office 365 documents?

Q I have been using Microsoft Office 365 for a couple of years because I was involved with a charity and needed Publisher for newsletters and Excel for accounts. I no longer need these tools as much, so I didn't renew my Office 365 subscription. However, I've since found that I can no longer print, which I think is very sneaky of Microsoft. Years ago I downloaded OpenOffice and remember having to convert my Word files before I could open them. Can you tell me how to convert my Excel and Publisher documents, so I can keep all the information in them and print them?

Richard Wilis



Use the free OpenOffice program to edit and print Office 365 documents

A Office 365 is a subscription service, but Microsoft leaves the applications on your PC so you can still view your documents. However, many features – such as the ability to print – are disabled. If Microsoft didn't do this, there would be little incentive for anyone to continue paying subscription fees.

Regardless, you have pretty much

answered your own question. OpenOffice (www.openoffice.org) is able to open documents created with Office 365, so just download the latest version then use Calc for your Excel files and Impress for PowerPoint presentations – and then you'll be free to edit and print.

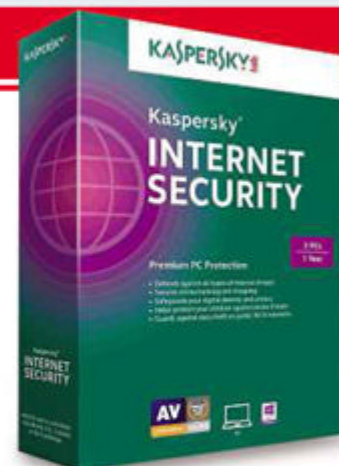
However, there's no guarantee the documents' layouts will be exactly the same, because there are different features

in Office and OpenOffice. This will be more of a problem in Impress, which lacks numerous features that you might have used in your PowerPoint presentations. For example, Impress doesn't have all the transitions that are available in PowerPoint, and it doesn't support Microsoft's narration format – so any voice-overs will need to be recorded anew.

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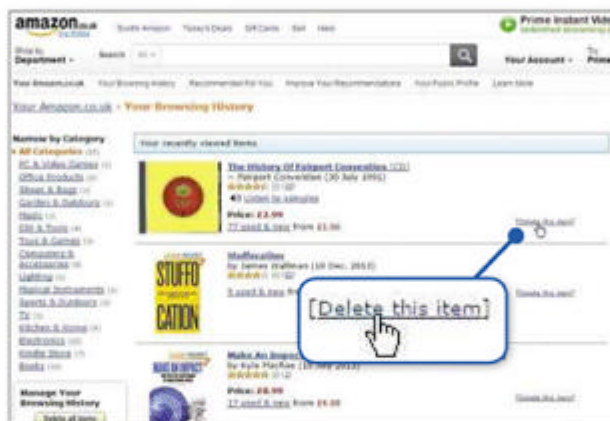
**Save
£17**

How do I delete my Amazon history?

Q I'm a recent convert to online shopping, but one recent Amazon experience might see me back in the high street! I've been shopping for presents for my husband's 60th birthday and it's been handy to have things delivered straight to my door. My husband wanted to get in on the act, so I passed him my laptop to have a browse. It was at that moment I noticed Amazon was displaying a list of items I'd viewed and bought recently, as well as items apparently 'inspired' by my browsing history. Naturally, some of these items were those bought for my husband's birthday – so bang went a bunch of surprises!

I'd like to stop this happening again, but I can't see how. I've followed one of your tips to clear my browsing history (I use Internet Explorer), but Amazon still displays these items. Why does this happen and how do I stop it?

Kat Tipler



Hide your recent activity on Amazon by tweaking the browsing history settings in your account

A This happens because you're logged into your Amazon account, so it's using and displaying information that's stored on your account. There are a few solutions.

If you're fine with Amazon storing this information for your eyes only, then simply log out of your Amazon account

before handing your computer to your husband. Click the down-pointing arrow alongside the Your Account link at the top-right of the Amazon home page and then choose 'Not [username]? Sign out'.

Alternatively, you can tweak the way Amazon uses your browsing and purchase history. In this case, click the Your Account link then scroll down and click the 'View and Edit Your Browsing History' link under Personalised

Content in the Personalisation section.

From here, you can delete individual items (click the relevant 'Delete this item' link), delete the lot (click the 'Delete all items' button on the left) or disable the feature entirely by clicking the 'turn off your browsing history' link on the left, followed by the 'Turn off browsing history' button.

How do I initialize my old hard drive?

Q I've recently scrapped my old desktop PC, but I want to use its hard drive as external storage for my laptop. I've put the drive in a caddy and when I connect it to my laptop I can see that the drive is installed. However, when I look in Computer in Windows Explorer the drive does not appear. I should mention that I have another external hard drive, which is recognised. I have looked at it in the Disk Management section of the Computer Management console and the drive does appear there, but it's listed as 'Not initialized'. How can I initialize the drive? I'm using the 64bit version of Windows 7 Home Premium.

Martin Tolhurst

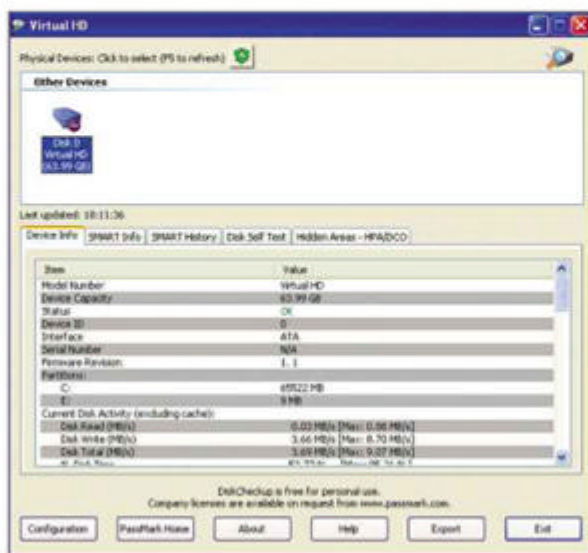
Management, right-click the drive then choose Initialize Disk. After a moment, the status messages displayed in the drive's capacity bar should change to Unallocated.

Now right-click it again, but this time choose New Simple Volume. Follow the installation wizard's prompts, clicking Next on each screen. At the Format Partition page, select the 'Format

this volume with the following settings' button, make sure the 'File system' dropdown is set to NTFS and then click Next followed by Finish. When the formatting is completed, the drive should appear in Windows Explorer.

If this doesn't work, download the manufacturer's Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology (SMART) tool to see whether it reports a problem. In the unlikely event that the manufacturer doesn't offer its own SMART tool, use a free generic alternative, such as PassMark DiskCheckup (www.passmark.com). Just fire up DiskCheckup, select the relevant drive and then click the SMART Info tab.

A Assuming that the drive hasn't become corrupted or developed a fault during the switchover (possibilities we'll explore later) then initialization is simple. In Disk



Use PassMark DiskCheckup to analyse a problematic hard drive

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22 July

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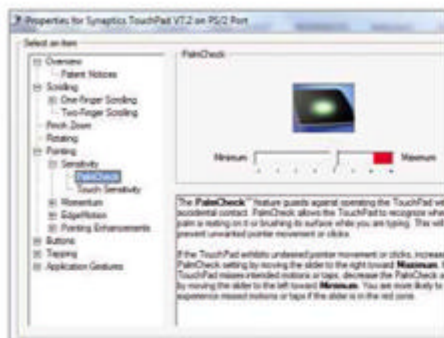
Your keyboard & mouse

Calm your jumpy mouse cursor, make special keys work properly and stop random scrolling on a laptop

Cursor jumps around your laptop screen

If your laptop's cursor won't stay still on screen, chances are the touchpad is the culprit: one wayward brush of your wrist and your cursor zooms all over the place. If you have a modern multi-touch touchpad, you may even experience a lot of unwanted scrolling or zooming.

To take control in any Windows version, press Win+R then type `main.cpl` and press Enter. Now select the Device Settings tab, click to select the touchpad and then click the Settings button. Available options vary, but you'll definitely be able to disable the touchpad completely, or even just tweak its sensitivity so it ignores accidental input.



Disable or tweak your touchpad's settings to tame an erratic cursor

Mouse movement is jerky

It's a myth that modern optical mice can't get clogged up with gunk like old-fashioned ball mice. With enough fluff in its electronic eye, your mouse will soon suffer from jerky or intermittent movement. So, grab a cotton bud or a can of compressed air and treat the lens on the underside to a gentle clean. If movement is no smoother afterwards and your mouse is wireless, try replacing the batteries – those AA cells don't last forever. Also have a look at your work surface: optical mice don't always work well on shiny surfaces or glass worktops. Best to use a dedicated mousepad or old tabletop instead.

Arrow keys move the whole screen

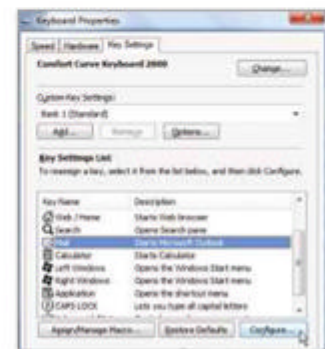
When navigating spreadsheets or other programs that display data in tabulated form, pressing one of the arrow (cursor) keys will usually take you to the adjacent cell. If this changes so that the entire table moves instead, then chances are you've inadvertently hit the Scroll Lock (ScrLk) key. Not all keyboards have an indicator light to tell you when this has happened. A second tap of that key will restore normal behaviour.

Keyboard doesn't work during startup

If your keyboard refuses to respond before Windows has started up, then you'll have trouble accessing your BIOS. In true chicken-and-egg style, this might actually be caused by an option in the BIOS. First, try attaching your keyboard to a different USB port, because some PCs assign priority to a particular port. If not, beg, borrow or buy a PS/2-style keyboard to access the BIOS, then look for an option to enable USB ports at boot. If you can't get one or your PC doesn't have a PS/2 port, venture inside your PC and pop the CMOS battery out then back in – this will reset the BIOS settings.

Special keys don't work

Many keyboards have keys dedicated to controlling media playback, or for web-browsing actions like Back and Home. These keys are enabled by special drivers, so if you're having trouble getting the keys to work you should first check that Windows has the latest drivers installed. In any Windows version, press Win+R then type `devmgmt.msc` and press Enter. Double-click Keyboards, then right-click your keyboard and choose Update Driver Software. Click 'Search automatically for updated driver software'. If this doesn't find any drivers, visit the manufacturer's website directly to see if there's a download link and install the latest version.

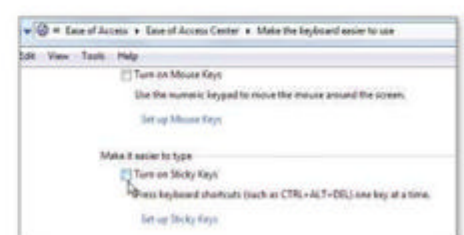


When special keyboard buttons do the wrong thing, investigate the drivers and settings

If some special keys work but others don't, or they do the wrong thing, press Win+R then type `main.cpl keyboard` and press Enter. What you'll see here depends on your keyboard, but for Microsoft models select the Keyboard Settings tab and then click the Restore Defaults button. If this doesn't work, scroll through the list to find an affected key, click to highlight it and then click Configure (see screenshot above) – and then use the dialogue box to set the desired control.

Keyboard keys get 'stuck'








Do you keep finding that keys appear to get virtually 'stuck'? For example, you press the Shift key just the once, but the subsequent letter you type also appears in upper case? Then you may have inadvertently enabled a Windows accessibility feature called Sticky Keys. To disable it, launch Control Panel and click 'Change how your keyboard works', then untick 'Turn on Sticky Keys'. To prevent it happening again, click 'Set up Sticky Keys' then untick 'Turn on Sticky Keys when SHIFT is pressed five times'. Click OK.



If some keys get 'stuck', disable the Sticky Keys feature

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Jargon Buster

4G A set of technologies that delivers faster mobile broadband, so called because it is the fourth generation of mobile data networking standards.

64bit A technology that processes information in larger chunks. Most modern computers are 64bit.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

Biometrics Using measurable personal characteristics, such as fingerprints, for identification.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Essential software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

Bot See Botnet.

Botnet A group of infected computers – Bots – connected together via the internet, and used to infect other PCs, send junk email and perform other criminal tasks.

Cache A temporary space for storing information. Can be memory used on a computer processor, or space on a hard drive used by a web browser.

Charms bar A new tool in Windows 8, used to access common tools such as search and print.

CMOS Complementary metal-oxide semiconductor. Can refer to both a type of image sensor chip used in some digital cameras and another chip on PC motherboards that stores the date and time.

Content Management System Software used to create a website and edit its content.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

CPU Central Processing Unit. Another term for a PC processor.

DLL Dynamic Link Library. DLL resources can be made use of by one or more Windows programs.

Dual core When two processors are combined into a single chip.

DisplayPort A new socket for connecting monitors that's still relatively rare.

Distribution A version of the Linux operating system and the programs that go with it, ready to install.

DLNA Digital Living Network Alliance is a standard for home entertainment products. Software that supports DLNA can send audio or video to any hardware that shows the DLNA logo.

DSLR Digital single lens reflex. A digital camera that uses a moving mirror so its viewfinder looks out through the lens.

DVI Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector that can carry a digital signal.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired PC networks.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

FAT 32 A system for formatting hard disks used by Windows 98 and ME, and still used for some portable disks.

Graphics acceleration The process by which the speed of the rendering of 3D images on a PC monitor is increased.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

Hero graphic A large banner image prominently placed on a web page. It's usually placed in the centre of the page.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

HTML5 The latest version of the Hypertext Markup Language used to create most web pages. HTML5 includes extra commands that allow for more complex designs.

Initialize The process of setting up a new hard drive so that you can partition and format it to accommodate your file system.

IP address Internet Protocol Address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

IPX7 An official industry rating classifying the level of protection in a product against outside intrusion. A rating of IPX7 means that a device can withstand incidental exposure to water of up to one metre for up to 30 minutes.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image.

Metadata A set of data that gives information about a file.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

MicroUSB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

mSATA A smaller version of the SATA interface.

Near-field communication (NFC) A technology that allows two devices to communicate by being touched together or placed near to each other.

NTFS NT File System. A file system used by all recent versions of Windows.

Partition A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications.

Processor The processor – or CPU – is the brain of a computer

PS/2 Personal System 2. A set of standards for such things as mouse and keyboard interfaces, originally used by IBM.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on.

RAW A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

Roaming Using your phone to receive data through overseas mobile networks.

RSS Really Simple Syndication. A simple format for automatically distributing news headlines and other content from the web.

Script A short program that is stored on a web server to control part of a website.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Server A computer on a network, such as the internet, that distributes information to other PCs.

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones.

SMS Short Message Service. More commonly called text messaging.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than normal hard drives.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Thunderbolt 2 A very fast port for connecting external storage to a computer.

Two-factor authentication A system that uses two different means to identify the user.

USB 3.0 A faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

Wiki site A collaborative website that users can easily edit.

WPS Wifi Protected Setup. An easy way to make a wireless connection between a device and your router by pressing the WPS button on both.

The Final Straw



STUART ANDREWS is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

In this issue Stuart Andrews is being bombarded by...

Kids and kittens

Last month I came across a report from an online-safety site in the US; a well-intentioned piece about parents misusing social media. It expressed concern about the way these Facebook users were exposing their poor children to potential internet threats. Among the statistics one really set my hair on end: the average American parent uploads 973 photos of their kids to social media, and that's just by the time the little ones reach five.

“

I can't move for photos of little darlings doing something that I'm told is adorable, clever, zany, strange or fun

”

973 photos in just five years - that's nearly 200 every year! That can't be good news for the kids. Most of us have a book of baby photos to be mildly embarrassed about, but these poor nippers will be dragging one around, instantly accessible from a browser, for the rest of their lives. Who knows who will see it, when and why? I'm a dad, and my wife and I share some photos of our daughter, but we're pretty careful about what and how much we upload. It's not that I expect she'll spend the rest of her life haunted by an image in which she paints her own face with ice cream or poses in superhero garb, but who knows? It should be her choice to make, not mine.

Mostly, though, this isn't good news for me. Sure, some of the charming people I

call Facebook friends post the odd photo of their offspring. I realise that sharing news about some big achievement or a photo of a big day out is what social media is all about. Yet some people go absolutely bonkers. I can't move for photos of little darlings doing something that I'm told is adorable, clever, zany, strange or fun. Every weekend sees the equivalent of an epic magazine photo shoot hit my Facebook page, as a Sunday afternoon trip to the park is documented in excruciating detail with the kind of zeal tabloids treat a royal visit. Who do they think wants to see this stuff?

And if the kids don't get you, the kittens will. I have many friends who can't let a day go by without uploading photos of their own dog, cat, puppy or kitten - and even ones belonging to complete strangers. Social media is swarming with small critters. Apparently, one in four cats and dogs are now on Facebook or Twitter. Seriously.

I don't know. Maybe you're one of the 17 million (yes, 17 million!) Facebook users who have liked the page of a Japanese Pomeranian called Boo (www.facebook.com/Boo). Or perhaps you've watched videos of feline superstar Maru (also from Japan), who is obsessed with squeezing himself into boxes. His YouTube channel has been viewed nearly



300 million times. If you're not sure what to do with the rest of your life, you can spend it watching Maru's videos at www.snipca.com/16833. Here in the UK we have the case of Laura Mellors, who has made so much money from YouTube videos of her guinea pigs she quit her job. As a species, we have an insatiable appetite for this kind of cutesy junk.

As always, I'm amazed by the ways we actually use the internet. We built this incredible resource for communications and information-sharing, and instead we watch a cat get stuck in a cardboard box - over and over again. Together, the kids and the kittens are winning the social-media wars. And you know what's really galling? I'm not sure even I can resist their terrible appeal.

While researching this feature, I looked up some of the so-called best cat videos, and spent roughly 20 minutes watching feline fiends jump into boxes or out of boxes, chase each other around and spin on the floor. If everyone else is spending work time doing this stuff, think about what it's doing to the economy.

Between parents uploading and cat fans downloading, life as we know it may soon come to an end.

✉ Do you agree with Stuart?
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